

**HISTORICAL  
MATERIALISM  
AND  
POLITICAL  
ANALYSIS**

**AMRITAVA BANERJEE**

If in the practical field of politics Marxism has its biggest impact, in the academic world of politics (in the field of political analysis as such) there is a great scarcity of Marxist materialist formulations. Marxist writings on politics have been mostly of the pamphleteering variety. In this context Prof. Banerjee's **Historical Materialism and Political Analysis** is a significant work as it provides useful theoretical insight into questions of politics. The Marxist materialist explanation of the 'political' is presented here vis-a-vis the modern behavioural and functional explanations. The more fundamental problems of politics like the nature of state power, the nature of elites, the role of ideology, the importance of political parties, the nature of political change etc. are carefully analysed from the historical materialist standpoint providing simultaneously a critique of the non-Marxist anglo-american models of political analysis.

The book is a necessary addition to the growing literature on Marxism.

**A Marx** for the students of politics.

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AMRITAVA BANERJEE



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TO

MY PARENTS

## Preface

The contribution of the Marxist materialist approach in the development of social sciences is well known. And there is a legion of writings on Marx and Marxism to make anybody understand this contribution. In the academic study of politics, however, the impact of Marxist materialism is not strong enough. An increasing Marxist political practice is set against a scarcity of Marxist theoretical thought on questions of politics. While the present author does not pretend to meet this scarcity, the present work may be taken as a simple introduction to Marxist political analysis.

The book presents an outline of what the Marxist way of understanding the 'political' is. The phrase 'Marxist way' is here conceived as the way of explaining human social activity within the framework called Historical materialism and through the method of Dialectics that the materialist framework allows.

Politics concerns everybody, this way or that. And Marxism concerns an ever increasing number of men—their ideas and actions, willy nilly, getting affected by it. Hitherto the historical materialist way of appreciating the political process becomes so important : which is what the book reveals.

Historical materialism is conceived as a general theoretical framework and is presented here as a more useful alternative to the students of politics who are otherwise facing a confused array of models of political analysis produced in the continental and American academic market. Presented mainly in the form of a critique, the historical materialist viewpoint is being well juxtaposed with the behavioural and functional viewpoints. It will allow the reader to get both the worlds on each of the important problems of politics discussed in the book.

Historical materialism, it has been argued here, provides a more dynamic framework to assess the 'political' in human



society. The minimum claim of the present work rests on the manner of presentation of this argument.

In preparing this work the author has received great help from the Council for Political Studies, Calcutta, which has allowed the author to publish in its journal, 'Socialist Perspective', some of the materials incorporated here. The author remains highly indebted to the Council.

For the present publication the admirable job done by K. P. Bagchi & Company, can hardly be expressed in a few words. To his friend, Prof. Radharaman Chakravorty (Head of the department of Political Science, the University of Burdwan), the author remains indebted for the special encouragement received.

To Srimati Phalguni Banerjee, M. A. B.ED., herself a student of politics, the author cannot express anything here.

December, 1977

Calcutta

AMRITAVA BANERJEE

# Contents

Chapters :	Pages :
1. Introduction : Philosophy and Political Analysis (Political Philosophy—The End of Philosophy ? Historical Materialism and Politics—Modern 'academic' Philosophy.)	1
2. The Need for a General Theory (The Eastonian Watershed—Scientific Abstraction and Theory Building—Historical Materialism as a General Theory—Politics as a Social Activity.)	14
APPENDIX : A Note on Functionalism	27
3. The Nature and Significance of Political Activity (The Growth of State Power—State Power as Class Power—Political Activity : Its Basic Nature The Importance of Political Activity.)	30
4. Ideology and Personality in Politics (Ideas and Heroes : Non-Independent 'factors' in Politics—The Importance of Ideas and Ideologies —When Ideology is Illusion—False Consciousness again : the 'end of ideology' Hypothesis—The Role of 'Heroes')	41
5. Classes and Elites in Politics (Class Rule or Elite Rule ?—On the Nature of the Elites—The Trouble with 'elitism'—The Pluralist 'rule of all'—Political Activity through Class-groupings.)	56
6. On Parties and Pressure groups (The Dialectics of Party Activity—Party Politics and the complexity of Social life—On the Role of Pressure Groups.)	69

7. On Political change	83
(The Meaning of Political Change—Study of change : Different Approaches—The Functionalist position—The Political Sociologist—Modernization and Change—The Dialectics of Change : Studying Revolution.)	
8. Historical materialism and Sociology of Politics	108
(The Development of Sociology—The Nature of Political Sociology—Historical Materialism, Sociology and Political Analysis.)	
Addendum : On the Significance of Two Basic Marxian Concepts in Political Analysis	123
(The Process of Alienation—The Process of withering away of the State.)	
Selected Readings	133
Index	137



## Introduction :

### Philosophy and Political Analysis

Philosophy, it is said, begins from wonder—wonder that is our world, wonder that is our life. And when the philosopher remains concerned with first principles, works out a body of eternal truths, that philosophy we find only ends in wonder. All religious philosophy, all metaphysics, would prove this contention. But when one's exploration of the 'wonder' can present some material logic on the growth and development of Beings in general and on the relative position and possibilities of the human being in particular, that philosophy we can say earns a meaning.

To explore the 'wonder' is, primarily, to gain wisdom. And from Pythagoras down to Marx all might agree with this meaning of philosophy as the pursuit of wisdom—some like the Marxists adding a proviso to be settled at the outset : wisdom for what ? Is it for its own sake that philosophers seek wisdom ? The Marxists at least would argue that philosophy as wisdom has meaning only in the sense of making men aware, wise and actively interested (a) about the things and processes around, (b) about their relative positions in this world and last but not the least (c) about the necessity of social change.

Philosophy, then, cannot be a search for eternal principles that are independent of human social processes. Yet it is precisely this notion about philosophy that has prevailed for a long time in human history ; it is this metaphysical tone that has affected human enquiry in various fields and is still in the minds of many modern writers. Consequently, men have gained little more than the earliest philosophers as to

the ways of assessing (not to speak of changing) the 'human condition'. And it is this immobility in philosophical pursuit that may justify such observation that the greater part of modern philosophy is hardly anything more than a footnote on Plato and Aristotle. We may take one simple illustration from the field of political philosophy that is our main concern in this book: While explaining 'Law' Aristotle is easily prompted by an idealist, metaphysical notion to assert that 'The law is reason unaffected by desire'.<sup>1</sup> Now, long after Aristotle, Rousseau would play the identical tune when concerning the discovery of 'rules' he would demand a "superior intelligence beholding all the passions of men without experiencing any of them".<sup>2</sup> We wonder how such unearthly 'lawgiver' and his 'laws' may be found. A more modern writer, E. Barker, sounds equally vague and metaphysical when he writes: "The action of the legislature .....is to declare the implications of the idea and ideal of justice, or the *right ordering* of human relations....."(Italics mine).<sup>3</sup> What does 'right ordering' mean and how that 'right ordering' can be effected in a Class divided society Barker cannot obviously tell us.

The abstract, uncanny wisdom of the legislators of Aristotle, Rousseau or Barker may well be replaced by a conception of the real, purposeful wisdom of the *living* man if we take the other notion of philosophy. According to this notion, philosophy is something that we all possess. Whether one is aware of it or not, one's attitude towards any significant problem of life unavoidably reveals a particular philosophy. Hitherto Marxist materialism envisages a purposeful, committed philosophy: philosophy guiding the analysis (and explanation) of the 'social' and the 'political' so that a change of the 'human condition' in the desired direction can be effected. However, in performing this task of guidance, philosophy ceases to be philosophy as it is traditionally conceived. That is, the philosophy of interpretation as such is sharply replaced by a philosophy of action.<sup>4</sup>

### Political Philosophy

The political sphere of the human society is not the creation of a social contract, nor is it the manifestation of divine spirit. The 'political' would grow slowly, evolving into numerous processes; and this growth and development of the 'political' would, at least on the surface, bring immense complexities making it highly difficult to comprehend and control the same. Thus political philosophy too, as philosophy, begins from wonder. And political philosophy may also end in wonder if the philosopher concerned remains engrossed in exploring the so-called eternal moral principles of political obligation. Yet that is the concern that most Anglo-American writings on political philosophy reveal.<sup>5</sup>

Philosophy that is abstract speculation cannot have much to offer while explaining the *political*. It only makes room for the growth of theories of the idealist variety. The forms of political analysis that flow from such philosophical theories are as such equally abstract, scholastic and unproductive. They do not offer scientific, historical, explanations—such political analyses developing as *dispassionate* studies in fundamental questions and processes leaving aside the specific contexts or the historical-causal connections involved in them.

Among all such idealist, abstract, philosophical speculation in politics that of Hegel, however, remains in a sense unique and significant. For, despite his idealist framework Hegel could clearly note the phenomenon of change. Hegel could work out a dialectical process of social development considering History not as a record of events passively reflected in mind, but rather as a story of man's self-creation. The great significance of Hegelian political philosophy lies in the fact that it is historically conceived. As Prof. Carl J. Friedrich has rightly said, in an introduction to Hegel's "Philosophy of History", "All his (Hegel's) most basic notions, such as the world spirit, reason, freedom, receive their meaning and significance within a historical context."<sup>6</sup>

The essential idea of change and development (even though



presented under an idealist garb) constitutes the most significant aspect of Hegelian thought. The History of the World is nothing but 'the development of the Idea of Freedom,' says Hegel.<sup>7</sup> And Philosophy, according to him, is interested only in the 'recognition of the process of development which the Idea has passed through in realizing itself i.e. the Idea of Freedom'.<sup>8</sup> What is more, concerning the nature of philosophy Hegel would rightly conceive a relativity in judgement when he says that every philosophy is nothing but 'its own time apprehended in thoughts'<sup>9</sup>.

The trouble with Hegelian political philosophy is, as we have already noted, its basic theological perspective. Thus his "Philosophy of History" ends with the following words : "... what has happened, and is happening everyday, is not only not 'without God', but is essentially His work".<sup>10</sup>

While Hegel's dialectic does not fail to note the process of change inherent in human activity and history (the Hegelian dialectic informing a pattern or mechanism of development through inner conflict), the Hegelian idealism rejects all possibilities of 'using' the knowledge of dialectic (of philosophy) to *bring* change. Philosophy, according to Hegel, cannot serve as an instrument of change. Philosophy can only interpret. This dualism in Hegelian philosophy well justifies Karl Korsch's observation that Hegel's philosophy is the culmination of the ideology of the Enlightenment which expressed the fulfilment and the limits of bourgeois thought, that it is 'both a philosophy of revolution and of restoration'.<sup>11</sup> We may say, so far as Hegelian philosophy interprets the world as a process of (dialectical) change and development, it is to that extent a revolutionary one. But as the Hegelian political philosophy ends up with the glorification of the prussian state, as Hegel cannot see any further movement or progress of the human society well away and above the prussian milieu, his is a philosophy of restoration. And it is this philosophy of restoration that looms large when, in the Preface to his "Philosophy of Right", Hegel talks about the limitation of philosophy :

Philosophy, says Hegel, in any case always comes on the scene too late to give any instruction as to what the world ought to be. "As the thought of the world, it (philosophy) appears only when actuality is already there cut and dried after its process of formation has been completed. . . . . When philosophy paints its grey in grey, then has a shape of life grown old. By philosophy's grey in grey it cannot be rejuvenated *but only* understood. The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk"<sup>12</sup> (*Italics mine*). So the 'Owl of Minerva' can only show how the state, the ethical universe, is to be understood. And as Hegel understood it, the state is something 'inherently rational'.

### The End of Philosophy ?

When the 'essentially rational' character of the state is taken for granted, the last word of political philosophy is uttered. With Hegel thus ends the great tradition of philosophy. Men like Feuerbach would now show that 'philosophy is nothing more than religion brought into thought and developed in thought'<sup>13</sup> and men like Karl Marx, while criticising the German philosophy of state and law, would uphold the demand for a negation of philosophy.<sup>14</sup>

A negation or abolition of philosophy cannot, however, imply that we are to set aside the '*philosophical*' for good. A negation of philosophy is the negation of that philosophy which is essentially interpretative (and speculative) and which is not critical towards itself. What is more, the task of 'negation' can be properly accomplished only when one realizes philosophy and transcends it accordingly. In Marx's words: "you cannot transcend (aufheben) philosophy without realizing (verwirklichen) it."<sup>15</sup>

When Marx was talking about the 'negation of philosophy' he was not just turning his back on philosophy and putting a simple slogan to '*change the world.*' As Karl Korsch has rightly observed: ". . . . just when Marx and Engels were progressing from Hegel's dialectical idealism to dialectical

materialism, it is clear that the abolition of philosophy did not mean for them its simple rejection."<sup>16</sup> Marxism could abolish philosophy (i.e. Hegelian idealism) only because Marxism could realize it in and through Dialectical materialism. Dialectical materialism is the supersession of bourgeois idealist philosophy and of all philosophy as such. And along with Korsch we may say : "the dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels is by its very nature a philosophy through and through."<sup>17</sup>

Marxism rejects that philosophy which is not at the same time *practice*. Hence the emergence of Marxism as a philosophy of Practice (Praxis). Dialectical materialism or the philosophy of praxis implies that the struggle against philosophy 'as such' will only end "when the whole of existing society and its economic basis have been totally overthrown in practice".<sup>18</sup> Thus a struggle against philosophy forms an inextricable part of social class struggles. In fact, the great contribution of Marxism in philosophy lies in the fact that it not only rejects philosophy as an interpretation of the world, but also ushers in a new revolutionary practice of philosophy that could reveal the partisan (class) character of all philosophies including, of course, that of Marxism. The distinguished French philosopher, Louis Althusser, has rightly said : "(as) all philosophy expresses a class position ; (hence) philosophy is, in the last instance, class struggle in the field of theory."<sup>19</sup> Althusser would, again, bring out a nice formulation relating politics with philosophy : that "Philosophy is politics in a concentrated form."<sup>20</sup> Thus Marxists like Althusser can help us understand how philosophy and politics remain intertwined : "Everything that happens in philosophy has, in the last instance, not only political consequences in philosophy, but also political consequences *in politics*—in the political class struggle".<sup>21</sup>

So, while philosophy (that is interpretative and speculative) is rejected, the importance of philosophy (i.e. dialectical materialism) well remains. And in political analysis the importance



of this Marxist philosophy as revealed in the study of class struggles, and the numerous contradictions between ever-changing position and ideas of men, can hardly be ignored.

### **Historical Materialism and Politics**

In the Marxist theory of human society the 'philosophical' is merged with the 'scientific'. This theory known as Historical materialism is the application to social problems of the more general conception of Dialectical materialism. It is, in the first place, a dialectical mode of conceiving history—that is, conceiving history as a continuous process of development of objects, ideas, relations and structures through their internal and external contradictions. It is, secondly, a materialist interpretation of the growth and development of human social formations (technically called the different 'mode of production').

As Historical materialism explains our societies and politics we also receive an altogether new philosophy of history. In the Hegelian philosophy of history, the motive power(s) in history is imported from outside. In the Marxist Philosophy of history, the motive power(s) is discovered in the history itself. It is real living men, the masses, that make history. History is a process of man's self-creation that knows no final, 'rational' end. And since 'the supreme being for man is man',<sup>22</sup> the forces (motives) that drive men must remain within the human and earthly sphere and not outside. Putting it here very briefly, the driving force is seen in the fight between social classes for existence and supremacy. (The opening words of the Communist Manifesto are so well known). This class struggle, it is to be noted, is the inevitable product of the contradiction between the 'productive forces' and the 'production relations'<sup>23</sup> in each social formation.

The social contradictions (that are in essence class contradictions whether openly manifested or not) are revealed in all our relations and they affect all our sciences, all ideas and philosophies, all our social and political institutions. The

irreconcilability of the contradictions, again, accounts for the inherent dynamism of everything human. Hitherto, in the study of politics (as in any other field) all those ideas of fixed moral principles or the permanence of certain institutions are discarded by Historical materialism. For example, concerning State, Historical materialism informs us that the state is not anything inherently 'rational': the state does not get its final development in the Prussian type of Junker state or in the modern capitalist state: the state, everywhere, is subject to continuous conflict and contradictions within it; change is immanent in every state: great revolutionary changes occur when those conflicts and contradictions reach a great high. Historical materialism further informs us that change is not a function of the unfolding of the spirit, but of men—real concrete men—organised in productive activities.

As an application of Dialectical materialism, again, Historical materialism by providing a new explanation of the historical process also enriches History itself. History, as such, may now develop itself into a weapon to serve the necessity arising out of that explanation. Today that necessity is one of making a revolution where the stage is set. Historical materialism thus provides a philosophy of revolution as well as a scientific account of revolution. Political analysis becomes meaningful when this processes of change and revolutionary transformation are observed and recognised.

The concept of class and class-struggle, it may be noted here, has been considered by many as an oversimplification of the human condition. It is so no doubt if we consider every individual as clearly representing his specific 'class' interest in all his actions at all times, or every ideology as an unambiguous 'class' ideology. Well, the historical process is not a mechanical process. Numerous cross currents, accidental developments and above all, the subjective position of men and their institutional activities often blur class distinctions. But then, a thorough social and political analysis is never to be made on individual microlevels. And if such empirical micro

studies are made, no amount of meaningful generalisation will be possible unless a large number of such micro studies are brought together and re-analysed as a whole *on the basis* of a general theory. The general laws of motion of human society (the law of class struggle being one such important law) that historical materialism reveals are products of such macro studies, of totality, of wholes, not of individual or isolated parts. As Engels has so nicely put the problem of understanding the nature of the motives and forces operating in the historical process: "When. . . it is a question of investigating the driving powers which—consciously or unconsciously, and indeed very often unconsciously—lie behind the motives of men who act in history and which constitute the real ultimate driving forces of history, then it is not a question so much of the motives of single individuals, however eminent, as of those motives which set in motion great masses, whole peoples, and again whole classes of the people in each people; and this, too, not merely for an instant, like the transient flaring up of a straw-fire which quickly dies down. but as a lasting action resulting in a great historical transformation."<sup>24</sup>

### Modern 'academic' Political Philosophy

For students of politics not interested in Marxist philosophy and/or having an inveterate penchant for belittling Historical materialism by ignoring it, there is surely no dearth of what we may call *academic* political philosophy. This academic political philosophy as served in different universities in modern times no doubt offers a scope for 'intellectual exercise' of a sort. Need it be mentioned also that such studies in political philosophy are, in the main, subjective evaluations or justification of political values, concepts and beliefs. A handy illustration of this sort of political philosophy is there in such writing as D.D. 'Raphael's 'Problems of political philosophy'.<sup>25</sup> Throughout the book the author performs a sterile academic exercise in what he calls the critical evaluation of beliefs and the clarification of conce-



pts. It may be mentioned that Prof. Raphael has totally failed to maintain any clear distinction between Clarification and Evaluation considered as the two different aims of philosophy. Political philosophy, according to Raphael, aims at setting up normative standards, the relativity of such 'standards' does not, of course, put any restraint on Raphael's philosophical thinking. The clarification of concepts that 'occupies the main part of much philosophical enquiry' will lead to the development of these normative standards—rational norms as Raphael claims. What the book, however, offers is a fruitless exercise in semantics and little of any 'rational' norm. Concepts like Sovereignty, Liberty, Authority, Democracy etc. are taken up one after another—the whole thing appearing as what we may call 'political philology' rather than 'political philosophy'.<sup>26</sup> Simply playing with words, moving around explanations given by this or that author or authorities Raphael's attempt in the clarification of concepts must have left himself in doubt whether he could assist anybody. And on such question as the 'grounds of political obligation' Raphael could only count on Locke, Rousseau, The English Utilitarians and the English Idealists whose political philosophy, as we have already noted, has come to an end belonging as it does to the tradition of speculative or idealist variety.

Even some among the critics of Marxism like John Plamenatz could rightly see the defects of mere 'linguistic analysis' in modern academic philosophy. While he does not, correctly enough, rule out the need for the analysis of political concepts, he would like to emphasize the significance of political philosophy by developing what he calls a 'form of *practical* philosophy'. But what does this practical philosophy stand for? It is, according to Plamenatz, concerned with systematic thinking about the purposes of government. We can appreciate Plamenatz when he argues that his practical philosophy is not connected with religion or metaphysics. But we cannot make out anything when Plamenatz starts describing those unique

type of men who are capable of making this practical philosophy. Thus writes prof. Plamenatz : "They are philosophers in a quite different sense.....They produce a hierarchy of principles, and try to explain how men should use them to make their choices.....They are people who have, or who believe they have, discovered how men should live ; and they will not be listened to unless they speak with conviction. They need not all speak with one voice, but each of them must take his stand. This is a condition of their effectiveness."<sup>27</sup> So the effectiveness of Plamenatz's practical philosophers is derived from their conviction as 'committed missionaries'. Very good. We can surely appreciate the need of conviction and even of a missionary zeal among those who develop political philosophy. But such conviction and zeal cannot grow within a man *ex nihilo*. The historical and social forces operating in the process of development of such convictions must be clearly noted. We are simply baffled as we find Plamenatz carefully evading this most fundamental question of the historical processes involved in the growth and development of a political philosophy.

So academic political philosophy remains either as linguistic analysis or as a system of principles mystically evolved—that of Raphael and Plamenatz respectively.

One important result of this state of political philosophy in the academic world is the increasing disinterestedness shown to the 'philosophical' in modern political analysis. And with the growth of the empirical and behavioural analysis in politics the philosophical is being quickly replaced by the '*psychological*'. In fact, it is psychology that has taken up the highest honour from modern political writers who consider the study of roles and attitudes, interests and behaviour patterns as more important in the analysis of the political.

The Historical materialist standpoint that has been taken up in the present study will thus develop mainly as a critique of this modern political analysis.

## Notes and References

1. See Aristotle's *Politics* (Trans. B. Jowett—int. by H. Davis)—Oxford, 1905 (1959 reprint—p. 140).
2. See *The Social Contract and Discourses* by Jean J. Rousseau (Trans. with int. by G. D. H. Cole)—Everyman, London : J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1913 (1938 reprint—p. 35).
3. Ernest Barker—*Principles of Social and Political Theory*. (Oxford Paperback, 1961—p. 176)
4. That famous thesis, quoted a thousand times by many may be repeated once more : "The Philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways ; the point, however, is to *change* it." (The eleven 'theses on Feuerbach' written by Marx in 1845 ; originally published by Engels in 1888 in the Appendix to his 'Ludwig Feuerbach').
5. The best example being that of T.H. Green.
6. See 'the Philosophy of History' by G. W. F. Hegel. (Trans. by J. Sibree ; int. by C. J. Friedrich).—Dover publications N. Y. 1956.
7. The philosophy of History—*Ibid.* p. 456.
8. *Ibid.* p. 457.
9. See Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right' (Trans. by T. M. Knox)—Oxford, 1942. (1962 edition, p. 11)
10. The philosophy of History, *op. cit.*
11. Karl Korsch—*Marxism and Philosophy* (Trans. with an int. by Fred Halliday) Monthly Review Press, N.Y. 1970, p. 22.
12. Hegel—'Philosophy of Right, *op. cit.* pp. 12-13.
13. In K. Marx—*Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, 1844*. (Marx mentioning one of Feuerbach's great achievements). See 'Early Writings' translated by R. Livingstone and G. Benton—int. by L. Colletti, p. 381 (Penguin, 1975).
14. While this demand is implied in the XIth thesis (on Feuerbach) quoted in footnote No. 4, Marx's treatment of the problem of negation of philosophy can be found in his earlier writing, viz. the critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. (Introduction).
15. K. Marx—*A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. (Introduction). in 'Early Writings'—*op. cit.* p. 250.

16. K. Korsch—*op. cit.* p. 76.
17. *Ibid.* p. 75.
18. *Ibid.* p. 97
19. "Reply to John Lewis (Self-criticism) Part I"—Article by Louis Althusser (trans. by Grahame Lock) in "Marxism today," p. 311. (Journal of CPGB, Vol. 16, No. 10 ; Oct., 1972).
20. This formulation well supplements the famous formulation of Lenin that 'Politics is economics in a concentrated form'.
21. Althusser's article, *op. cit.* p. 312.
22. See Critique of Hegel's philosophy of Right by K. Marx—*op. cit.* p. 251.
23. The meaning of these two vital concepts in Marxism will be explained in the next chapter.
24. F. Engels—Ludwig Feuerbach and the end of classical German Philosophy. pp. 44-45 (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1969 print).
25. D. D. Raphael—Problems of Political Philosophy (Macmillan, 1970).
26. A fuller comment on Raphael's book is made by the present author in a review of the book in 'socialist perspective', Vol. 1, No. 2. Sept. 1973. (a journal published by the Council for Political Studies, Calcutta).
27. 'The use of Political theory' by John Plamenatz in Anthony Quinton (ed.)—Political philosophy, p. 28 (Oxford, 1967).



## The Need for a General Theory

A scientific study of politics refers to a systematic study of those phenomena, those relations and activities, that are concerned with State power. Systematic study implies the logical construction of a theoretical system—the development of a unifying principle—on the basis of which the study is to be made. The much-talked limitation of the scientific character of the social sciences being taken for granted, one cannot, however, make it an excuse and still call one's discipline a science without any such theoretical system or a general law/principle to start with. For, otherwise that 'science' would be a promiscuous field producing no uniform results, allowing no clear understanding of what it is supposed to communicate. In fact, this is what the discipline of political science suffers from even after more than two thousand years of history that it has known to have covered. This long history only shows how the study of politics is taken up by the lawyers, philosophers, mystics, political historians and all sorts of peoples as they desired. Hitherto, its scope is yet to earn any unanimity among the political scientists, its methods yet to be clear and scientific. It has been rightly observed by the famous British scientist and social thinker, Bernal "Political Science as hitherto been taught does not deserve the claim of a genuine science".<sup>1</sup>

Some people claim that with the dawn of the 20th century the discipline has been able to earn its scientific status. The introduction of the psychological approach and the development of behaviouralism, they would say, have brought in a real revolution in the discipline of political science. The study of group behaviour and the empirical analysis of the political motives and attitudes have, according to them, undoubtedly

made the discipline of politics a scientific one. There are others, however, who argue that behaviouralism has only been successful in reducing politics into a sub-field of sociology. In fact, the behavioural 'revolution' has contributed greatly to the development of what they call political sociology in the West.<sup>2</sup> In any case, the claim of the behaviouralists can hardly be accepted as they have miserably failed to build up any theoretical system or a clear conceptual framework to allow a meaningful study of politics.

The study of group behaviour, of the behaviour of pressure groups and interest groups, of the political attitudes of different political structures and sub-structures—all such studies can be of great use and importance if only they are made on the basis of a general law of social development. The application of such a general law can make the huge stockpile of otherwise pointless 'empirical' research a fruitful one. After all, micro political studies as such are not unimportant. On the contrary, they must comprise a significant part of political analysis. However, what we require first is a scientific law of social change—a general theory of social activity to direct those micro level study/analysis.

### **The Eastonian Watershed**

There are people who point out to the Eastonian 'revolution' in political science providing one such general theory. David Easton, the famous American political scientist, has no doubt made an attempt to construct a theoretical framework for the discipline of political science. And Mr. Easton is bold enough to claim that his book "The Political System" (where he has worked out his theory) provides a watershed—a turning point—in political science after the second great war.<sup>3</sup> His 'general systems' theory has the more ambitious claim to serve all the social sciences.

Easton, it appears, feels the necessity of a scientific theory in the study of politics strongly enough. He tells us that universal generalisations about social relations are possible.

And he regrets that political scientists have not made serious efforts to attain valid and useful generalisations about political life, to attain reliable, generalised knowledge. In Easton's own words : "Indeed such is the state of political research that it is not uncommon to hear that many a Washington columnist has an intimate insight into and reliable knowledge of political life envied by most political scientists. The same cannot be said about the businessman's knowledge of economics or the visitor's insights into a foreign culture as compared with the respective generalisations of the economist or the cultural anthropologist."<sup>4</sup> Easton also admonishes the political scientists for their meagre concern for the problems of change. As he says : "Over the last seventyfive years political research has confined itself largely to the study of given conditions to the neglect of political change".<sup>5</sup>

Taking stock of this deplorable condition of political research in the West—in America in particular—Easton endeavours his best to present the scientific foundation of politics as he conceives. Here the initial task, according to Easton, is one of building up concepts—concepts with clear, unambiguous meaning. The strength of a science, thinks Easton rightly, depends on the strength of its concepts. It is, however, a fact that concepts in vogue such as democracy, sovereignty, authority, liberty, etc., which our students hardly get any clear idea of (as each concept has as many definitions/explanations as there are writers in political science), make a mess of the whole affair called political science. Easton rightly observes : "The imprecision of the concepts explains in large part the reasons why there are such differences about political generalization."<sup>6</sup> Only with clarified concepts can one develop a theoretical orientation that is necessary for the kind of understanding of their data that students of political life seek.

The 'broad-gauge' theory of Easton—the conceptual framework within which he likes to cast the discipline of political science—is to be found in the 'systems analytic approach' that he has developed. This approach—this mode of

analysis—finds the political system as “major social arrangements” where collective actions are revealed. The important thing to note in this analytic approach is that it views the “political system as a *purposefully* organized form of behaviour”<sup>8</sup> (Italics mine). One may ask : What is the purpose ? Or, what are the more important purposes ? Well, the ‘systems analytic approach’ is not meant to tackle such uncomfortable questions. The Eastonian researcher has no duty to see whether in all societies there can be any *overriding* purpose affecting or determining the character of the political systems. Instead he has a whole world of purposes to take care of. The systemic approach, in short, provides for the study of endless possibilities and forces working in the political system. Hitherto the character of the forces is never clearly known. And the *force* of the ‘forces’ is never conceived to be strong enough to bring a thorough overhauling of the political system. The approach will only focus one’s attention to all possible reasons for the selection or rejection of this or that purpose(s) or action(s) and to all possible consequences of the same.<sup>9</sup> But how can one maintain that ‘focus’ on such unlimited number of ‘reasons’ and ‘consequences’ ? Well, systems analysis offers us the aid of what is called ‘input-output model’ to do the job. (The inputs of demands and supports getting converted into outputs of authoritative decisions and the feed back processes affecting the next round of inputs—that is the model in its easiest outline).

For our present purpose we need not go into a detailed critique of the model. We can only point out that like structural-functionalism in sociology, the systems analysis and the input-output model has so far not been able to provide a satisfactory account of the change and development of political systems.<sup>10</sup> In fact, with all his concern for a theoretical framework to study the changing polity Easton’s model appears a static one. It completely ignores the struggles and violent upheavals, nay, the model offers little opportunity to take account of the nature and development of the antagonistic



relations that characterise all social and political systems. To my mind Easton and his followers have committed the supreme mistake in going to emulate their fellow economists and developing the so-called input-output model. It may not be unwarranted to comment that these American political scientists suffer from the very common disease of 'catching up the Joneses'. We may cite a brazen confession of this diseased feeling of Mr. Easton himself: "It is true that with the exception of public administration, formal education in political science has not achieved the *recognition in government circles* accorded, say, economics or psychology"<sup>11</sup> (*Italics mine*). This makes one doubt whether Easton's concern for a scientific theory of politics is genuine enough; may be his sole concern is that of making the study of politics 'sophisticated' enough to receive that favour of the Establishment.

### Scientific Abstraction and Theory Building

A social theory or a political theory can be of any scientific value only when it is capable of giving a reliable account of the *inner logic* of the ever-changing socio-political fabric. To that extent every theory must be based on, or closely related to, a conception of Social Dynamics. And as we can say now, the whole tradition of political thinking in the West—from Aristotle to Easton, is conspicuous by the absence of any such conception.

To Aristotle—or for the matter of that to the Greeks—must, however, go the credit of making the first attempts to analyse and to present logically the problems of the social sciences including politics. Aristotle deserves special mention for his attempt at a comparative study of several city governments, thereby making the first systematic observations in the field of politics. The Greeks, however, could not develop a science of social dynamics especially because they would work on the basis of certain fixed immutable ideas and values like justice, goodness, etc. And the theoretical system developed by men like Aristotle is clearly a static one as the revealed

intention is one of getting a system of state and government that may keep social equilibrium without bothering about the inner contradiction of a *slave society* prevailing at the time.

It is a far way from Aristotle to Easton. We can understand Aristotle's limitations—the inadequacy of a first attempt at a Science of Politics. We cannot, however, appreciate the so very sophisticated model-experts in the West doing the very same thing (studying the political system that keeps and maintains equilibrium—managing tensions, attaining goals as the analysts say) that Aristotle did, and suffering from the very same limitations that Aristotle suffered from (that is, ignoring the inner contradictions of contemporary, *capitalist*, societies).

The Greeks may, however, put a greater claim (compared to their modern American counterparts) as we take stock of the contribution to the development of Social Dynamics. In the development of Social Dynamics the *method of abstraction* is of supreme importance. The social sciences demand a reliance on the force of abstraction as a substitute to the material tools and equipments that the natural sciences make use of. And, as J. D. Bernal writes, "the major contribution of the Greeks to social science was their success in abstraction, in finding words to express common elements in diverse situations without always having to refer to particular instances."<sup>12</sup> Abstractions, of course, must not be made in a haphazard manner. In the social sciences we find a plethora of words and categories abstracted and used at random to justify the otherwise unjustifiable conclusions. Thus a concept like 'justice', a word abstracted by Plato (not in a very scientific manner) from the conditions of the Greek city, may be used today (and is actually used by many political 'scientists') to justify the most arbitrary and undemocratic governments. Bernal has rightly observed: "The values and ideals that the Greeks had words for still plague us to this day."<sup>13</sup>

The fact is, the process of scientific abstraction is not often followed carefully by the Social Scientists. It is often forgot-

ten that values and ideals can represent no finality, that they are social constructs and hence they change with the change in society. Abstractions will be unscientific if they are made with a motive to justify and perpetuate a particular state of affairs. But that is what they have been doing (and are still doing) in the West. Thus they would perpetuate the illusion that words such as "parliamentary democracy", "two-party system" correspond with some fixed and unsurpassable ideal.

The first and till date perhaps the only improvement on the Greeks in the use of abstractions is made by Marx and the Marxists.<sup>14</sup> In the Marxist usage, "the legitimate purpose of abstraction in social science is never to get away from the real world but rather to isolate certain aspects of the real world for intensive investigation."<sup>15</sup> The level of abstraction always depends on the number of aspects of reality one chooses to deal with. Thus, a movement from a high level of abstraction to progressively lower levels of abstraction implies an increasingly larger aspect of reality that one takes into account. The principle of scientific abstraction that Marx has followed is that of (a) showing a proper regard to the problem investigated and of (b) distinguishing the essential from the non-essential in order to eliminate the latter. Paul Sweezy has rightly pointed out that this principle is of equal importance to the critics in order to test the validity and relevance of the assumptions/abstractions found in the Marxian System.<sup>16</sup>

### **Historical Materialism as a General Theory**

The scientific use of abstractions made by Marx and the Marxists has made possible the development of the one grand conception of Social Dynamics that we have and that is capable of making a Science of Politics possible.

Karl Marx framed a general hypothesis about the way social life develops—a general law of social development. In a very simple form the law may be stated thus : Human beings need to adopt their *relations of production* to their *forces of production* and work out ideas and develop institutions for the same. (By forces of production is meant the tools and implements,

the skill and knowledge and above all labour power needed to produce the means of subsistence ; by 'relations of production' is implied the multiple relations between men that develop in the process of the whole action of production and distribution). The forces of production and the relations of production together constitute the *social mode of production* that explains and indicates the nature and character of socio-political activities. When the contradiction between the forces of production and the relations of production reach the zenith of irreconcilability, the society goes through a revolutionary transformation. That is, one social formation or mode of production (say, Feudalism) gets replaced by another (say, Capitalism) when the old relations of production appear as a fetter on any further development of the productive forces. In terms of political analysis it means that the old (social) political order becomes at a particular stage an intolerable impediment to all social and political development. Thus the order of the ancient regime in 18th century France (which order was only the political expression of the production relations of the French society at that time) was only putting so many fetters on all possible productive forces, that is, putting obstacles on the development of all human faculties, of all progressive potentialities of that society. As such that ancient regime only invited its replacement by a new one with a promise to release productive forces. The emergence of Bourgeois democratic political systems in France and many other European countries provided the necessary replacement—the rising Bourgeoisie being at that time a real revolutionary force with all progressive potentialities and intentions.

This general theory—often known as historical materialism can well serve as the guiding line in the study of politics. To get a clear idea of Historical materialism the reader may simply go through Marx's Preface to "A contribution to the Critique of Political Economy" and/or Engels's "Ludwig Feuerbach and the end of Classical German Philosophy"—(Section IV)".<sup>17</sup> Here we may only indicate the significance of Histori-

S.C.E.R.T., West Bengal

Date: 13-3-87

Page No. 3994





cal materialism as a methodological system in the study of Politics.

Historical materialism, we may note, is the way to answer one fundamental question of human life : what is the primary condition of social life ? The answer is : Men producing together the material means of life. And as Maurice Cornforth remarks, "(this) proposition that to engage in any form of social activity people must first associate to produce their means of subsistence, was the fundamental proposition on which Marx based the science of society."<sup>18</sup>

In this foundation of the Marxian system what is significant is that in human society only material facts exist and develop independently, values and ideas reflecting the existence and development of the material world. In this material world, again, the 'economic factor' is insisted on as *the* material factor as it changes and develops causing change and development in what Marx calls the 'superstructure' of society. This is not determinism. For, the impact of values and ideas is not ignored ; the role of individuals and ideologies is also appreciated. It is, however, to be noted that these ideas and values, these individual achievements and institutional workings have their meaning only in the particular set of economic arrangements prevailing at the period concerned. Thus, it is true that men make their own history. "But", as Marx rightly says, "they do not make it just as they please ; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past."<sup>19</sup>

When one comprehends the method of dialectic that Historical materialism incorporates, one would find how flimsy the charge of 'economic determinism' is. The dialectic reveals the inherent dynamism of each mode of production. That is, in each mode of production the continuous interaction and conflict between the basis and superstructure constitute the most fundamental reality. In mechanical materialism a political or cultural element may be considered just as a product

of the economic base. And hence such approach is deterministic. But Historical materialism as an application of dialectic would inform us that while the basic contradiction between the productive forces and the production relations (as revealed in the struggle between classes) affects everything fundamentally, these 'affected' things, in their turn, act upon the basic contradiction—the whole process developing through such interaction until a final stage is reached when all these developments would culminate in a process of basic transformation of the entire social formation.

It is to be noted that the transformation itself is a process. That is, a new social formation does not suddenly come up one fine morning, people suddenly getting everything anew—a new social and political order, a new culture and so on. Thus, particular historical dates like 1789, 1917 or 1949 etc. are not exactly the end and the beginning of an old and a new social formation as changes in the scenes of a drama. The emergence of a new socio-political system (and hence simultaneously the decadence of the old one) is a process that covers a wider period—the period of final battle between the old and the new, the old trying desperately to retain power and the new gaining strength to capture power—the period sometimes covering a century, sometimes only a couple of decades. In any case, just as even well before those 'great' dates the new political ideas would seem to be in command of the position, similarly even after those dates the old political forces could be found influencing many.

Historical materialism proposes that in every form of society the social changes and political transformations are to be sought not in the increasing insight of men into the laws of eternal truth and justice (or some such ideas), but in the changing methods of production and distribution. Political ideas and activities change and get replaced by newer ideas and activities as the social mode of production undergo a change. New classes arise one after another on account of technical and economic changes, in the methods of production, and of the

changed legal, social and economic relations flowing from the same. The conflicting desires and aspirations of the classes are reflected in myriad ways in the contending political ideas of the time.

### **Politics as a Social Activity**

Politics is a social activity. And it is an activity characterised by conflict and diversity. This is agreed upon by all concerned with political analysis. What, however, many of us fail to notice is the social root of all these conflicts. Political struggles and activities are often explained in terms of individual motivations, love for power and so on. In the field, politicians too wage their battles in the name of all kinds of principles, ideals and universal ends. But in effect each group, each political party can be found pursuing its own sectional, class interest related with the particular mode of production it is living in.

It appears then, a science of politics cannot develop while it remains away from political action on the one hand and a general social and economic analysis on the other. The science of politics that Historical materialism makes possible is, again, of a character whose interest in future is no less than its interest in the past and the present. Thus, the political scientist gets well equipped to suggest the possibilities of changes in the Polity. Historical materialism allows him to understand the necessary conditions of that change. The State and State power, the government and its constituent parts, the political party and the elite, the parliamentary and the dictatorial authority—all these problems and concepts may now be studied by the political scientist with a feeling of purpose. And this feeling of purpose alone can make the otherwise dull and hackneyed study of politics a lively one.

A general scepticism in politics has been developing very fast. This has been the inevitable result of the gross discrepancy between the ideal theory of politics (the theory pursued by the Western academicians and their counterparts in coun-

tries like India) and the actual practice of politicians. Historical materialism alone can eliminate this macabre hiatus and is at the same time capable of spreading that *feeling of purpose* so essential for this crippled discipline of politics. This conception of Social Dynamics thus prepares the ground for the study of politics that will be scientific and at the same time interesting, interesting because it will be scientific.

### Notes & References

1. J. D. Bernal—"Science in History" : Vol. 4 ; p. 1210 (Pelican Books, 1969).
2. On the development of Political Sociology, see G. Sartori's article in S. M. Lipset (Ed.) "Politics and the Social Sciences". (Wiley Eastern, 1972).
3. David Easton—"The Political System" (Indian Edition) see Preface to the Second Edition, 1971.
4. D. Easton—*Ibid.*, p. 42.
5. *Loc. cit.*
6. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
7. Easton calls his theory a 'broad-gauge' one compared with the theories with lower levels of generalization. See *Ibid.*, pp. 55-57.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 372.
9. Hitherto the approach is considered to be a problem-oriented one, very much as the behaviouralists considered theirs.
10. C. P. Bhambhri—"Functionalism in Politics" in the Indian Journal of Political Science (Vol. XXXIV. No. 4) for an interesting critique. —see also Appendix.
11. D. Easton—*op. cit.*, p. 39.
12. J. D. Bernal—*op. cit.*, p. 1037.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Sobhanlal Datta Gupta—"From ideology to the Science of Politics" (Socialist Perspective, Vol. 2, No. 1) for a good account of the Marxist method of understanding reality.



15. Paul M. Sweezy—"The theory of Capitalist Development", p. 18 (Dennis Dobson, London, 1962).
16. Sweezy, *Ibid.*, p. 20.
17. A good treatment of Historical materialism is also rendered by G. V. Plekhanov—"The Materialist conception of history" and by Louis B. Boudin—"The Theoretical System of Karl Marx".
18. Maurice Cornforth—"The Open Philosophy and the Open Society", p. 26. (International Publishers, 1970).
19. Karl Marx—"The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte", p. 10 (Progress Publishers, Moscow. 1967).

## Appendix to Chapter—2

### A Note on Functionalism

Functionalism, it is often claimed, provides the most comprehensive framework in the study of politics. Hitherto, as a full-fledged theory of politics the functionalist approach is considered as the only alternative approach to Marxism.

A functional analysis of politics owes its origin in what is known as structural-functionalism in Sociology and Social Anthropology. As a reaction against the older theories of evolution, structural-functionalism represented the new tendency among sociologists and social anthropologists not to ask questions about origin but to explain how in a social system particular structures work and how the part played by (i.e. how the functioning of) different structure could help in maintaining the system as a whole.

In political analysis functionalism keeps the fundamental idea of equilibrium or system maintenance in the political process. The functional analysis of politics has a starting point supplied by Talcott Parsons according to whom the solution of four functional problems of pattern maintenance and tension management, goal attainment, adaptation and integration characterize every social (and political) system. Thus the most important group of functionalists in politics (viz. that of G. Almond, J. Coleman, L. Pye, S. Verba and others) consider the political system as a system of functioning interaction which contribute to the integration and adaptation in the political process. While laying down the functional requirements of a political system—the input functions of political socialization and communication, interest aggregation and articulation and the output functions of rule making, rule application and rule adjudication—Almond traces his model in the writings of Montesquieu and the Federalist papers. But

Almond's Parsonian root seems more entrenched as the final question in his studies remains that of system maintenance or adaptation function.

When the political processes are not (and we know that they very often do not) as such contributing to the equilibrium or the so-called 'well-being' of the system, the functionalist may, of course, rely on another sociological concept to get out of the situation. This is the concept of dysfunction. Dysfunctions are considered as processes that lead to strains and disintegration in the system. We do not know whether the functionalists would go so far as to apply this pure and simple technical jargon to explain the process of severe struggle between classes, a struggle that often leads to radical social transformations and not just to 'strains' and 'disintegrations' in the system.

A political system no doubt reveals a picture of so many interacting structures and elements. It can also be seen that such input and output structures like pressure groups, political parties, roles, regulative norms or the legislature and the executive are performing important functions in the working of the political system as a whole. But are these not telling or observing the most obvious, the most apparent? Surely, there is nothing wrong in describing the 'obvious'. But political analysis is undoubtedly something more than that. For political analysis the more important task is to develop an explanatory theory that would help us secure the deeper relation, the historical and social setting and background (if not the origin) of the functioning elements. Functionalism is not simply one such explanatory theory. It cannot explain historical change. It evades the problem of conflict and contradiction, it ignores the class interests that work behind the sustenance and preservation of certain functioning elements as well the class interests that work for the elimination of some such elements. Thus, it is not enough to say that a particular structure of a religious taboo or of a social custom (say like that of 'untouchability' or of 'suttee') are just dysfunc-

tional in the process of growth of a democratic polity. It is rather necessary to emphasize that such taboos and customs are preserved and sustained in the greater interest of a particular social strata(s) serving the ulterior purpose of maintaining the grip of a particular social order (in the above case well that of the Brahminical feudal order). The functional analysis appears useless because of its incapability to apprehend and explain these forces and motives.

Above all, as we shall see in a later chapter here in this book, the functional analysis is thoroughly a tool to justify the *status quo*. There is no conception of social and political change of the great historical types, that everybody knows, in the functionalist framework. It seems correct when one says that functionalism too purports a philosophy of politics—a carefully devised political ideology conditioned by the nature of Western (particularly American) capitalism.



## The Nature and Significance of Political Activity

We may start with a very general statement : Political activity is one that is, causally or consequentially, connected with state power. That is, politics is what exists because some form of state power exists. The emergence, development and significance of politics/political activity is thus connected with the origin and evolution of state power.

These days, however, the study of origin has lost much of its earlier prestige. Social thinkers at large do not consider the task of exploring the origin of social and political institutions worth paying any more.<sup>1</sup> And in fact, while historical evidences of such origins are scanty and doubtful, most of the logical formulations on the same remain unconvincing. But if studies on origin appear unworthy (or are being rapidly discarded), studies on the *nature* of the same remain quite relevant and significant. Thus, newer analysis/formulations are being made on the nature of the social and political institutions. And a convincing logical formulation on the nature of an institution will always provide a clear insight regarding the origin of the same. Historical materialism, it is maintained here, provides *the* way to develop such a scientific/logical formulation concerning the nature and origin of the social and political institutions. Hitherto, following the materialist interpretation of history, we place below a brief note on the nature, and hence also the origin, of state power to form consequently an idea on the nature of politics and political activity.

### The Growth of State Power

Karl Marx, the founding father of the materialist interpretation of history, did not work out any systematic and formally

complete theory of the state. A clear account of the emergence of political power may, however, be secured from the work of F. Engels, the great friend and worthy collaborator of K. Marx.<sup>2</sup>

Following Morgan's<sup>3</sup> study Engels would analyse the three main stages of human history viz. savagery, barbarism and civilization (which are again subdivided into lower, middle and upper stages in each case) thereby introducing a definite order in the development of human society. The political community (i. e. the state) is found to be emerging at the turning point, from the higher stage of barbarism to the lower stage of civilization. As Engels writes, "The state. . . . has not existed from all eternity. There have been societies that did without it, that had no conception of the state and state power. At a certain stage of economic development, which was necessarily bound up with the cleavage of society into classes, the state became a necessity owing to this cleavage".<sup>4</sup> The materialist conception of history thus rejects the notion of the state as a power forced on human society from outside, thereby also rejecting the notion of the state as "the reality of the ethical idea", or "the image and reality of reason" as Hegel maintains.<sup>5</sup>

The state power, then, comes in owing to the differentiation into social classes within the community following the growth of productive forces and of wealth. The state comes out of a definite necessity created by a particular socio-economic milieu. It is a product of the society at a certain stage of human development ; it is not just the 'family writ large', neither due to a contract nor due to mere force. It is due to a cleavage, a cleavage of society into classes at a definite stage of economic development. That definite stage of economic development is one when 'private property' becomes a factor of importance in society and interhuman relations. All men cannot possess private property or if they possess, they possess unequally. And those who amass the bulk of the wealth in the society also get associated with the ownership and control of

the means of production. The division is clear. Two broad categories develop—one controlling and the other controlled : the exploiter and the exploited, the haves and have-nots. At different stages of history they are the master and the slaves, the patrician and the plebeians, the feudal lord and serfs and to-day the bourgeois and the proletariat. The different names only suggest the different forms of relation that have developed at different stages in history, indicating different modes of production. But fundamentally the relation between and among peoples remains the same at all stages and times—a relation determined by class antagonism and class struggle. The Authors of 'The Communist Manifesto' thus open the epoch-making pamphlet with the following lines : The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.<sup>6</sup>

### State Power as Class Power

Now it be may asked : How is the struggle of classes related with the growth of the state apparatus ? The materialist interpretation of history has a clear answer to that. The class struggle creates a situation where all feel greatly disturbed and all human relations turn undetermined and uncertain. The property owners, in particular, feel insecure about their lives and properties. Again, as the overwhelming number of people (never getting enough) get oppressed by the few, chances of chaos/revolt increase. So men of different shades and sympathies had to give thoughts for *order*. The idea of law and such other organizations and institutions as may be necessary for the purpose of self-protection and for the perpetuation of the so-called order is thus developed by the exploiter and his worried associates. The germ of the state is laid and it grows too, gradually, in a full-fledged form. Thus : Private property creates class, classes are in conflict, the conflict is not to be eliminated (since the haves are not ready to relinquish their privileged position nor the have-nots willing to accept their serfdom eternally), the conflict again brings the greatest inconvenience to the social life, the necessity of an order is

felt, the wealthy thinks of ways of self-protection and peaceful accumulation, the state comes in. The state is thus "the product and the manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms. The state arises when, where and to the extent that class antagonisms objectively cannot be reconciled. And, conversely, the existence of the state proves that the class antagonisms are irreconcilable".<sup>7</sup>

Historical materialism, then, reveals the position that the state power has grown, essentially, out of the need to preserve and protect the interests of the propertied section of the people in the earliest periods of human history. The state thus remains an instrument of class rule—an organ for the oppression of one class by another. The state creates order that legalizes and perpetuates this oppression by moderating the collisions between the classes. The state is not for the welfare of the generality of the masses; it is not going to provide 'happy and honourable life' for all; it is rather a cruel and powerful instrument in the hands of the owners of the means of production. As Engels writes, "As the state arose from the need to hold class antagonisms in check, but as it arose, at the same time, in the midst of the conflict of these classes, it is, as a rule, the state of the most powerful, economically dominant class, which, through the medium of the state, becomes also the politically dominant class, and thus acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class."<sup>8</sup> To illustrate the position we may again quote Engels who, while studying the rise of the Athenian state writes, "The first attempt to form a state consisted in breaking up the gentes by dividing the members of each into a privileged and an inferior class, and the latter again into two vocational classes, thus setting one against the other."<sup>9</sup>

Without any single exception states have been, and are still, class states, state power is class power, state purpose is class purpose. The birth of the welfare state or the acceptance of democracy with its ideals of freedom, equality etc., are in no way able to change this fundamental nature



of the state. Thus the contemporary representative state is essentially an instrument of exploitation of wage labour by Capital. Democratic states and democratic legal systems are just sugarcoatings intended to suppress the bitter taste of exploitation. As Harold Laski so rightly observes: "The state.....expresses the wants of those who dominate the economic system. The legal order is a mask behind which a dominant economic interest secures the benefits of political authority. The state, as it operates, does not deliberately seek general justice, or general utility, but the interest, in the largest sense, of the dominant class in society."<sup>10</sup> Modern states pay lip-service to the ideals of Liberty and Equality. People are allowed to enjoy 'fundamental rights' but only 'thus far and no further', that is, so far as the enjoyments of their rights and privileges do not directly interfere with the interests of the rulers.

### **Political Activity : Its Basic Nature**

The foregoing analysis of the origin and nature of state power that Historical materialism unfolds can very well form the basis of our understanding and explanation of the nature and significance of politics and political activity. For, what else (other than state power) can a political activity be associated with? Today in a country like India the functions of the state are legion. And while the state is not the whole of society, it alone can cover the entire society. The diverse political-legal activities of the state with a variety of goals affect the community, rather the activities are meant to affect the community. The community, in its turn, the masses of people of different categories (with their different degrees of affiliation, support and commitment to the two main contending classes) would react, would act politically so to say, with different levels of consciousness and with varying limits of open and covert movements.

The very concept of politics, then, implies the existence of different and conflicting ideas about how the facilities and

personnel of the state should be used. And this is agreed upon by most of the modern writers on politics, even by those who do not subscribe to the materialist interpretation of history. Thus one writer observes : "Politics.....is about disagreement or conflict ; and political activity is that which is intended to bring about or resist change, in the face of possible resistance."<sup>11</sup> Another writer observes almost in the same vein : ".....political activity is not an abnormal aspect of human behaviour. It is the process of accommodating the conflict that stems from..... diversity."<sup>12</sup> Modern political analysis thus offers two clear formulations on the nature of politics :

- (a) that politics is universal and omnipresent ;
- (b) that politics represents a process of conflict and divergence.

These two aspects of politics, again, as we have already seen, flow easily from the explanation based on Historical materialism. However, those who do not subscribe to the materialist interpretation would continue their 'exploration' on the *why's* of conflict and arrive at as many reasons/sources as they can go on inventing failing ultimately to provide any light on the fundamentals of politics/political conflict. It is thus argued by one writer that diversity which gives rise to conflict need not have an objective base such as economic or racial differences. "Opinions not directly linked to objective differences may form the source of political activity."<sup>13</sup> Others would refer to skill, intelligence, status, national and religious sentiments, personal ambition etc. etc. as so many factors in the development of political activity. And yet they would opine that the most obvious of all the social bases for divergence is the economic one : "man exists in a condition of perpetual scarcity, where everyone cannot have all he wants, and where some have more of what they want than others."<sup>14</sup> The point is, while these political pundits can hardly ignore the materialist interpretation, (and borrow their basic explanation from it without any acknowledgment) they go on with their so-called 'open' approach to place the *wider* truth. In

this way they keep themselves away from any charge of 'economic determinism' that materialist interpretation of history is allegedly guilty of. But the fact is, it is from the writings of sociologists like Thorstein Veblen (whom incidentally these Anglo-American pundits speak highly about), and not from Historical materialism, that the deterministic approach emerges.

Historical materialism does not ignore the role of 'other' factors; what it emphasizes, however, is the fundamental and basic role of the material factor (not just 'economic' factor) in the development of all political processes. The ill-educated and/or well-motivated writers in the west do not appreciate this position. In any case, in their eagerness to avoid any commitment to Historical materialism they actually bring a medley of facts and ideas that confuse the study of the nature and significance of politics.

The basic nature of politics is the ubiquity of contradiction. In political activity we do find many attempts at conciliation, mutual understanding, entente and even the apparent reconciliation of opposite forces. Thus in international politics we have examples of peace treaties, conferences, negotiations, etc. as attempts to accommodate conflicts. And all these examples again prove that the process of contradiction (and conflict) is universal, that the very necessity of co-operation arises out of man's desire to resolve contradictions. The resolution of a contradiction, however, only implies the emergence of a new process of conflict and divergence, may be on a different plane. For example, while the achievement of Freedom (independence) by the Indians in 1947 would mean the resolution of the contradiction between U.K. and her Indian colony, it would at the same time initiate, for the new Indian polity, a new process of innumerable contradictions that characterize India today.

### **The Importance of Political Activity**

The significance of politics lies in its becoming increasingly

all pervasive. Historical materialism demonstrates the tendency that a larger number of people get into political activity as the productive forces change and the technological base of the society gets expanded. The different socio-economic formations illustrate this. "Thus the maritime slave-economy society of ancient Athens evolved a democracy of slave-owners. The city-states of Feudal Europe created a somewhat broader democratic system, suited to the particular class and technological conditions then prevailing. When capitalism developed, with its wide-ranging need for 'free' wage labourers and 'free' trade, there emerged a variety of forms of bourgeois democracy, encompassing much wider elements of the people and including a complex pattern of rights and privileges."<sup>15</sup>

The more pervasive politics becomes, the more significant it is and the more mobile one's society will be. It is to be noted, however, that while the significance of politics is enhanced by an increasing number of people participating in it, the participation is, in most cases, one of reflex action rather than a planned activity. Yet these involuntary actions well indicate the varying political outlooks of the larger section of the people. And those who are actually 'doing' politics need be vigilant about the changing views of the greater number.

In appreciating the significance of politics some writers find it to be not so fascinating as to impress the larger number of people who are only casually, incidentally, getting involved in politics. Hitherto such writers would speak of the so-called limitations of politics. And what are the limitations? Well, the fundamental limitation of politics is that "in practice, most differences and inequalities cannot be greatly altered" and that "governments cannot make people good or clever, cannot dictate the terms of international trade, cannot control the climate, and cannot secure unlimited credit.....governments make change under pressure, but cannot do everything."<sup>16</sup> As if an activity gains significance only when it is capable of doing 'everything'.



Historical materialism would tell us, on the other hand, that while politics, like any other human activity, cannot claim to do 'everything' it can surely do much. Thus political activities may bring revolutionary changes; only that political activity is not to be conceived as governmental action simply. The significance of political activity lies in its being basically a social activity. As Karl Marx writes, "Do not say that social movement excludes political movement. There is never a political movement which is not at the same time social".<sup>17</sup> This integral connection with social and political movements is what we need to learn while analysing the nature and significance of political activity. For, while political activity is shaped and reshaped according as the social formation changes, a particular social formation, in its turn, can be greatly altered through organised political activity.

In India for example, the adoption of universal adult suffrage and the growth and development of political groups of different shades have no doubt contributed greatly in changing the rather immobile social structure of the country. The caste-infested Indian society, the never-dying communalism and such other narrow parochial tendencies have no doubt received a great jolt owing to the penetration of political activity deep into the Indian villages. While economic development and programmes of industrialisation create the base for social mobility by rapidly eliminating the man made social differences, the rationale behind the elimination of such stratification is supplied by politics.

It is well-known fact that twenty-five years of open democratic politics in India have not significantly altered the country's stratification system; nay, in some cases caste and communal feelings (along with provincial feelings) have only reached the uncompromising high.<sup>18</sup> And that is, of course, owing to politics of a sort. There are people who join politics for personal gain; they take politics as a game that brings power and money. Hitherto, according as opportunities arise, these people get engaged in the very important task of inciting

such caste and communal feelings, playing one group against another. But that does not in anyway reduce the significance of politics. That only increases the demand for political activity with a firm ideological orientation and under the leadership of bigger personalities. We take up this role of ideology and personality in politics in the next chapter.

### Notes and References

1. Thus R. M. MacIver and C. H. Page write, "How and when did society begin? That particular question has grown obsolete and the answers to it, such as that of the 'social contract' theory, have been discarded. The seed of society is in the beginnings of life, and if there were such beginnings in any absolute sense we know nothing of them." 'Society : an introductory analysis' ; p. 589. (Papermac, London, 1962).
2. See F. Engels, "The origin of the family, private property and the state" (Foreign Language Publishing House, Moscow).
3. L. H. Morgan, 'Ancient society or Researches in the lines of human progress from savagery through barbarism to civilization' (While Engels based his work on the research of Morgan, he elaborated and improved upon the latter's analysis in order to lay the foundation of Marxian analysis on the growth and development of human society and polity).
4. See F. Engels, *op. cit.*, p. 285.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 279.
6. The Communist Manifesto of K. Marx and F. Engels (with explanatory notes by D. Ryazanoff), p. 25. (Radical Book Club, Calcutta, 1972).
7. See V. I. Lenin, 'The state and revolution', p. 12, (FLPH, Moscow).
8. F. Engels, *op. cit.*, p. 282
9. *Ibid.*, p. 180.
10. See Harold Laski, 'Introduction to Politics', p. 14 (Unwin Books).
11. See J. D. B. Miller, 'The nature of politics', p. 14 (Penguin, 1962).

12. See Alan R. Ball, 'Modern politics and government', p. 24 (Macmillan, 1971).
13. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
14. J. D. B. Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
15. See H. Selsam, D. Goldway & H. Martel (ed) 'Dynamics of Social Change—A Reader in Marxist social science', p. 325 (International Publishers, N. Y., 1973).
16. J. D. B. Miller, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-29.
17. See Karl Marx, 'The poverty of philosophy', p. 152, (Progress Publishers, Moscow).
18. For a study of the problem of these disruptive forces in India see my article, 'India : social forces in a stunted polity'; in Amal Kumar Mukhopadhyay (ed) "Society and Politics in contemporary India", (Council for Political Studies, Calcutta, 1974).

## Ideology and Personality in Politics

In common parlance politics is regarded as a business for two types of people—the self-seekers and the idealists. Direct and regular involvement in politics is thus considered characteristic of (a) those who take politics as a means for the further gratification of self-interest, and of (b) those who are incorrigible idealists. If such a common sense view oversimplifies the issue, it is, perhaps, not wide off the mark. A scientific analysis of politics may lead us, albeit in a modified form, to a similar assessment.

In a sense, the activities of the 'self-seekers' cannot be called political activity as such. What these people remain busy with is better termed political intrigue. Even then it cannot be gainsaid that the 'intriguers' too constitute a 'force' in politics. As to the second set of people, however, there should be a wider modification. For, politics considered as a business of the idealists may imply a purely ethical activity. In common usage the term 'idealist' is related to those who are known to uphold moral virtues. It is no use denying the presence of such persons. They do consider their activities, even when they are in the field of politics, as ethical activities. But then, all the 'idealists' are not of this variety and secondly, even these moralists-idealists in politics cannot claim to be working according to some eternal principles of right and wrong. An eternal principle of justice or ethics is an impossible commodity. Ethical and moral connotations change according to the changes in time and place. There is, in other words, a relativity of ethics and morality. Historical materialism helps best to understand this relativity of ethical norms and virtues. And this Historical materialist approach



will account for all the difference lying between the scientific and the common-sense view of the role of the 'idealists' in politics.

### Ideas and Heroes : Non-Independent 'Factors' in Politics

All great actors in politics are 'idealists'. As we can say, excepting the virulent self-seekers, all serious minded people engaged in politics are guided by one or another ideal. To have an ideal does not mean to be after the Utopia ; even though in politics one would very often accuse the other to be guilty of pursuing the Utopian ideal. On the other hand, to have a more elaborate set of ideas and beliefs (and not any 'ideal' as such) does not necessarily make one a less idealist, for his ideas and beliefs may carry a heavy dose of metaphysical tenets. The point is, the role of idealism is one thing ; the role of the idealists implies a much bigger question to think about. The former, the Hegelians in politics for example, constitute a part of the latter that is the whole. The Marxists too are idealists, communism being their ideal. Taken in this broadest sense the study of the idealists in politics may be resolved into (a) the study of the ideas and *ideologies* in politics and (b) the study of the great actors, the individual *personalities* pursuing or working under such ideas and ideologies.

There are people who may begin with a very general notion of justice, of a just order and of bringing the same to the country concerned. They are people who feel greatly disturbed, who suffer from a sense of injury, as they observe the agonising 'wrong' state of affairs of their fellow beings and 'unjust' treatment of the same by the authorities concerned. These people fight for 'justice'. They join and create movements, participate in the seats of power, try to capture power or influence those who wield power in order to implement their conception of the just order. At the least, they would go on moulding and forming public opinion to undo or weaken the existing order. They are all idealists as they work for others,

for certain conception of just social order, caring less for any personal relief or gain. However, they are not 'all' idealists if by that term we mean the philosophy of a known variety as mentioned earlier. For, there is no one conception of a just social order, there are 'conceptions'. As society remains divided, as the nature of the social divisions differs historically, so do men's ideas of social right and wrong appear varied and often conflicting too.<sup>1</sup>

So the 'active' in politics will pursue his goal for a better social order according to some ideology—ideology conceived as a coherent system of ideas and beliefs concerning the nature of social and political relationships. In fact, politics would have lost much of its significance if there were no ideology to 'push' the politically active.

This role of ideology is to be considered, again, with the role of the 'super-actor'—the hero or the great in politics. For, ideologies get newer meaning, additional power, an extra spirit, so to say, in the hands of personalities. An understanding of political behaviour thus demands a study, in the first place, of ideologies—of what they are, and of the uses to which they are put, and secondly, of personalities—of the nature of their greatness and the impact of the same on society.

Ideas and ideologies affect one and all whether one likes it or not. While the term 'ideology' may be of a more recent origin<sup>2</sup>, ideological forces have always been working in and affecting the human mind since the earliest days of human social formations. In some cases, in ancient times, attempts were made to systematize certain social and political ideas, to formulate ideologies so to say. Thus, the ideologies of 'the rule of wisdom', 'the rule of the middle class', 'Aristocratic polity', 'commune polity', etc. etc. can be found in the writings of Plato, Aristotle and others. One may discover similar ideological forces in the ancient societies of the East even though here such forces would work under the cover of, or along with, religious forces. A perusal of history would, in short, reveal the continuous presence of

one or more ideologies at all times and places. And in modern times the presence of ideologies is too conspicuous to escape our notice. As one author remarks: "our modern age is prominently an Age of Ideology.....In ways that were never true before, our modern wars are ideological wars, our party conflicts ideologlcal conflicts."<sup>3</sup>

It is, however, the story of the great men—more than that of ideology—that history ordinarily presents before us. For, history as it is *usually* written relates facts about the rise and fall of political formations at different stages of human civilization and such historical descriptions are, in the main, eloquent testimonials of the role of individual personalities. So we get great kings and benevolent dictators, weak rulers and crooked ministers, humanist leaders and religious reformers etc. etc. Such history is, of course, incomplete, if not incorrect, in what it reveals. Historical materialism and its dialectical approach cannot subscribe to this sort of history—this "Bad King John and Good Queen Bess" theory of history as E. H. Carr so aptly puts it. This does not, however, imply that the materialist interpretation of history offers no recognition to the role of heroes and personalities in social and political change. Far from it. The point is, the will and force of the individual in particular situations under specific historical setting is not to be confused with the *free* play of any such will or force. In historical materialism the will, the greatness of those who rise to the 'occasion', is recognised; it is the concept of so-called *free will* that is denied.

In politics, then, we consider the role of ideology and personality not as so-called "factors", as independent elements; we rather consider such ideologies and personalities as they develop under particular historical situations and shape themselves according to the varying and conflicting demands/interests of the specific time and place.

### The Importance of Ideas and Ideologies

At no time in history did all men feel contented with any existing social, economic and political order. Men would, on the contrary, think of a still better social life at every stage of their historical development. Hence the growth of ideas and ideologies. As C. Delisle Burns has so rightly observed : '.....the motive forces in the formation of the present have been in part the *conceptions* which men have had of what is desirable'<sup>4</sup> (*italics mine*). These conceptions are called ideals or ideologies. A study of the development of ideologies will, to a great extent, improve our knowledge of the changing character of the polity. To quote Burns again, "The achievements of the past are the basis for change, and it is evident that the meaning of such achievements may be more fully understood by considering what men desired than by a record of battles or great men or group habits. Every age therefore may be supposed to have contributed something to our political inheritance not only in its achievement but in its ideal".<sup>5</sup>

The growth and development of ideology has a dialectical course. In the first place, there is the contradiction between the existing socio-economic milieu and the expected state of affairs, the process contributing to the development of ideology. Secondly, there is the contradiction between the hopes and needs of a particular time and the class and classes trying to formulate systematic ideas in response to those hopes and needs, the process resulting in varying levels of maturity of political ideologies. Thirdly, there is the contradiction between the crude, often not manifest, aspirations of the masses and the more sophisticated ideologues giving expression to those latent or crudely manifest aspirations of the masses, the process again leading to different degrees of revolutionary or reactionary character of ideology. The growth and development of ideology involves various other contradictions as it brings into relief a plethora of features like the nature of an economy (the productive forces and the production relations), the character of the intellectual process, the type of religio-



ethical norms, the ways of the ruling class or classes etc. etc.

Rousseau was, perhaps, right when he pointed out : "Of itself the people wills always the good, but of itself it by no means always sees it".<sup>6</sup> Rousseau had his own reasons. For our present purpose, however, we can take this observation on its own merit and add that this combination of genuine goodness with utter incompetence among the generality of the masses provide the greatest field for the play of ideology. In fact, the successful working of an ideology depends much on how it is being taken by the broader public. The power of an ideology is also tested best with reference to the nature and extent of its influence on the masses of the people. As Karl Marx so nicely observed in his Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of the Right : "Idea becomes a material force when it grips the masses".<sup>7</sup>

All ideas and ideologies are not, however, capable of being equally comprehensive—all cannot grip the masses in the same manner, with the same speed. Ideas having a radical character can obviously grip the masses more firmly. As Marx would continue his observations in the 'critique' mentioned above. (Idea) Theory is capable of gripping the masses when it demonstrates *ad hominem*, and it demonstrates *ad hominem* as soon as it becomes radical. To be radical is to grasp things by the root. (And).....for man the root is man himself.

A study of the development and distribution of the ideologies like nationalism, liberalism, humanism, fascism, communism etc. in modern times will reveal the relatively different, the greater or lesser improvement of the, position and power of an ideology. An ideology may go on increasingly losing its inherent capability of being widely spread owing especially to the changing nature of the human relations and man's productive activities. Such is, for example, the fate of the ideologies like liberalism and humanism. On the other hand, an ideology may not develop a comprehensive character as to its impact on a people that has developed an imperviousness to such an ideology. Such imperviability may be the contribu-

tion of a large number of factors like the pampering received by the existing and traditional forces from the elites, the relatively more foreign colour of the new ideology, the incompetence of the bearers of the new ideology, the greater control of the vested interests over the masses and so on. Last but not the least, we may refer to an ideology which cannot develop being not properly conceived or being ill-formulated. Here the person(s) responsible fail to resolve the different aspects of the contradiction that the new ideology reveals as it faces other ideological movements in the field. Such is, for example, the fate of the ideology of 'militant nationalism' in India failing ultimately because of a better and more effective handling of the forces in the prevailing situation by the ideologues of non-violence and social democracy.

In to-day's world, whether it is a tribal area or a highly sophisticated polity, the rule of ideology in political activity and the power structure is evident. As to the importance of ideology in the tribal societies let us quote an authority on the primitive governments in Africa. Commenting on the Bantu people he points out: "They take the existing system for granted, and do not question its suitability or strive for something better.....But uncritical acceptance of the system does not imply uncritical tolerance of every chief or subordinate authority... There are definite ideas of how rulers should behave, and in concrete situations those ideas do much to determine the popular reaction".<sup>8</sup> In a more developed polity we find a regular battle of ideologies as men develop newer and more conflicting conceptions of the socio-political order. Even in a state formed after a socialist revolution the battle of ideologies is not being eliminated. Thus the need of a cultural (i. e. ideological) revolution both before and after the socialist revolution is appreciated by all concerned. For, when a revolution changes the base—the system's economic foundation—the superstructure does not automatically transform itself accordingly. So one fundamental duty of the post-revolutionary era is to pull down the old superstructure that remains.

The aim of cultural or ideological revolution is thus one of carrying socialist ideas into the superstructure and eliminate the feudal/bourgeois remnants.

### When Ideology is Illusion

Karl Marx spoke of 'ideology' as false consciousness. He called it false as he analysed the ruling ideas on the wake of Bourgeois Democratic Revolution in Europe. By false consciousness is meant a set of mistaken beliefs shared by a whole group of persons or even a whole community. Such consciousness denotes a number of closely connected illusions fostered by persons having similar position and function in society. As an example of such ideology, such false consciousness, Marx and Engels would refer to the bourgeois ideas about the state.

The specificity of the Marxist characterisation of ideology as false consciousness is to be kept in mind. Ideologies originate and develop in response to unique political, economic and social circumstances. But persons translating those ideas may do it in a wrong or improper form and fashion. For such form of ideas, and for such form only, Marx would use his epithet 'false consciousness'. It is not as simple as equating any and every ideology with 'false consciousness'. However, it has been considered by many that in Marxian usage the term 'ideology' is used in a derogatory sense, that in interpreting the term Marx follows the pattern of Napoleon and Chateaubriand rather than that of Destutt de Tracy.<sup>9</sup>

In their critique of the German Philosophy at their time Marx and Engels remarked: "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i. e., the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force."<sup>10</sup> So even the ruling class ideology which is an illusion, a false consciousness, arise from a social organization of production. It no doubt reflects the social basis; that social basis is, however, expressed in a false form and fashion. As Herbert Marcuse explains so rightly: "The ideas of the ruling class become the ruling ideas and claim

universal validity, but the claim is founded on 'false consciousness'—false because the real connection of ideas with their economic basis and therefore their actual limitations and negations do not enter consciousness."<sup>11</sup> It is then a condemnation of the illusion fostered by each epoch of class society, rather than a general disparagement of ideologies, that we find in the works of Marx and Engels. It cannot be otherwise. The authors of Historical materialism cannot be accused of being guilty of such idiotic self-contradiction—first telling us that ideology is false and asserting next that ideas may become a material force. The fact is, they made the first observation to counteract the prevailing liberal, idealist view that thoughts and ideas growing independently go on controlling events. The second observation is made to establish the force of ideology in human society. It is worth noting, in this connection, a cogent remark from the well-known British economist and social thinker Mrs. Joan Robinson: "Once the view that ideas arise out of material circumstances has been accepted, there is no sense in denying that causation runs both ways. If Marx had believed that ideas can have no effect on events, why should he have taken the trouble to write a book?"<sup>12</sup>

### **False Consciousness again : the 'End of Ideology' Hypothesis**

An interesting development in political thinking in the second half of the 20th century is the formulation of a new illusion in the west. This is the "End of Ideology" or "Decline of Ideology" hypothesis, the brain-child of the intellectual establishment in U. S. A. These dispassionate, non-committed social scientists like Daniel Bell and S. M. Lipset have suddenly discovered a happy-go-lucky style of doing the business of politics by people of all categories. No more any battle of ideologies, no division between the right and the left, no political thinking so to say. Such a blatant glorification of *non thinking* appears too amateurish and ludicrous to deserve any serious attention. However, we may use some more space



as the illusion concerned is being fostered by the more established writers in America.

It is true, as society gets more and more complicated, as industrial growth and crises change men's positions, there will be frequent shifts and turns in the ideological position of individuals, groups and parties. But that cannot unmake the fact that ideological clashes remain—interchange of units in different ideological camps cannot eliminate the camps altogether. And in a country like India there is little scope for such opportunistic shifts and turns on the part of the larger sections of people.

The simple truth concerning these writers is that in proclaiming an end of ideology they are only revealing their firm commitment to one ideology, viz., the ideology of the 'status quo' which, incidentally, is the ideology of the vested interest in any society. They all find the good democratic polity in operation. So much so that according to Lipset it makes little difference which political party controls the domestic policies of individual nations.<sup>13</sup> D. Bell links the end of ideology to its inability to arouse the masses nowadays. And this inability, according to him, is the direct consequence of modern society's having solved the basic problems of industrial society. To quote Lipset again; ".....the fundamental political problems of the industrial revolution have been solved; the workers have achieved industrial and political citizenship, the conservatives have accepted the welfare state, and the democratic left has recognized that an increase in over-all state power carries with it more dangers to freedom than solutions for economic problems."<sup>14</sup> When problems are solved and everybody accepts everything, it is adieu to ideology.

The hypothesis of "end of ideology" thus assumes that history is moving toward an ultimate static equilibrium in which politics becomes a sterile activity. It thus denies the continued relevance of human ideals. A more sober answer to these non-believers of ideological movements is given by an English writer: "The actual ideological standing of various

parties may be the subject for a more detailed debate and may demand terminological variations, but the important point is that this sort of movement does not necessarily imply the end of ideological adherence, and that the supporters of the end of ideology argument have, in fact, made this mistake because of their narrow definition of ideology as a concept interchangeable with revolutionary utopianism."<sup>15</sup>

The campaign for the "end of ideology", the Marxists may add, is in fact the movement for a new ideological stance for our era—a false consciousness of this epoch, only negatively formulated.

### **The Role of 'Heroes'**

As in the case of ideology, misconceptions are well manifest on the question of the role of the 'great', of the unique personalities in the society and the polity. It is mere ignorance or deliberate mis-representation that relates Historical materialism with the denial of the role of individual personality in history. The significance of volition, of human will, especially in respect to its role in revolutions, is recognised well in the materialist interpretation. One can amass a plethora of references and elaborations from the writings of Marx, Engels, Plekhanov and others to appreciate the position.

Revolutionary changes imply changes in the totality of circumstances. Like a big locomotive revolution carries the whole people with it. And revolutions are man-made. Thus we speak of the makers of revolutions. And as such we mean that circumstances may be altered by men. Historical materialism, it is true, considers a revolutionary situation emerging "only" when the conflict between the forces of production and the relations of production have reached a critical high. History has, however, more than one instance to show that even after that critical point a revolution may not occur automatically. Or there would have been proletarian revolutions in England, France or Germany much to the pleasure of the authors of the communist ideology. In the actual making

of the revolution, then, the historical materialist view would recognise the role of organisation and leadership. Was it not Lenin who said that he and his party performed the task of so many decades in so many days only. The conflict between the forces and relations of production must reach the critical point—after all, a pre-renaissance Europe with little growth in technology could not expect a bourgeois democratic revolution, nor a colonial India with a sprinkling of capitalist development could expect a socialist revolution. But “Once this conflict emerges...it creates man’s consciousness of it and thereby the will to revolt, to fight for a new social order.”<sup>16</sup> Thus the actual course of revolution is largely determined by the great leaders, the great personalities in history.

Historical materialism no doubt regards the mode of production as the prime mover of history. It recognises the role of will, but denies a completely free will. And this is the logical and scientific position that we should ungrudgingly accept. Even Bismarck, himself a great personality, accepted the position. G. V. Plekhanov quotes Bismarck who said that “we cannot make history and must wait while it is being made.” But who makes history? Asks Plekhanov and he continues: “It is made by the social man, who is its sole factor. The social man creates his own, social, relationships. But if in a given period he creates given relationships and not others, there must be some cause for it, of course: it is determined by the state of his productive forces.....In this sense, indeed, he cannot make history”.<sup>17</sup> But there is another sense in which he can make history and Plekhanov does not forget to make reference to the same. So he writes: “...If I know in what direction social relations are changing owing to given changes in the socio-economic process of production, I also know in what direction social mentality is changing; consequently, I am able to influence it. Influencing social mentality means influencing historical events. Hence, in a certain sense, I can make history, and there is no need for me to wait while it is being made”.<sup>18</sup> Almost in the same vein E. H. Carr sums

up the role of the great man in history : "What seems to me essential is to recognise in the great man an outstanding individual who is at once a product and an agent of the historical process, at once the representative and the creator of social forces which change the shape of the world and the thoughts of men".<sup>19</sup>

Those who do not subscribe to the assessment made above would refer to the unique role of the Charisma, of a personality with a rare gift of grace. The Charismatic personality—a category developed by Max Weber—is capable of taking a whole people with him. But how does that personality grow ? Does Charismatic leadership imply a superman ? Is he that omnipotent, omniscient being capable of moulding or changing anything he likes to, himself remaining unperturbed ? Surely, Max Weber was no dreamer to build up such a category. On the contrary, Weber was very much doubtful about the period of duration of a Charisma. He was rather more convinced of the inevitable decline of the charismatic authority in course of time. Thus he had to develop the other concept, 'routinization of Charisma' or the transformation of the charismatic authority into either the rational legal form or the traditional form or into a mixture of the two. While Weber could not provide any historical explanation for the growth of 'Charisma', his idea of 'routinization' would prove that he too had to admit the basic limitation of any conception of the "*Great as a free force*".

The so-called independent role of leadership and personality is rejected by many others in studies other than Historical materialism. Thus in Social Psychology leadership is considered to be a product, a function of interaction. At least three separate elements are involved in this process of interaction viz, the leader, the followers and the social situation broadly conceived. While to the broader public the leader alone gains all appreciation, the political scientist cannot fail to note the contribution of the mute followers and that of the ripe objective situation. A modern writer notes this contribution in an

inimitable fashion : "The man who speaks to others and carries them to the actions he desires ; there is the man who makes history. Yes, but there is one who decides whether our 'hero' shall indeed make history : it is the man spoken to".<sup>20</sup> The role of the great, of the outstanding personality, thus appears in this sense as the role of a collectivity represented by the great concerned. And this is only so logical. Unlimited capability is a misnomer ; the leader is always in need of active cooperation, aid and advice. Again, no personality, howsoever great he may be, would receive a blank cheque from the whole people he is working for. In fact, a study of the personality in politics is easily comprehended when we refer to the social groups and classes that he represents most. In the next two chapters we shall as such refer to the role of such groups and structures.

### Notes and References

1. In the previous chapter we have already explained this position of conflict.
2. Destutt de Tracy is credited with the innovation of the term 'ideology' in 1796. Using it as a philosophical and anthropological term he would mean by it a general doctrine about ideas. Destutt and his followers later called themselves "the ideologists". . . . . See 'Democracy, Ideology and objectivity' by Arne Naess and others pp. 148-150, (Basil Blackwell, 1956).
3. F. M. Watkins, 'The Age of Ideology—Political thought 1750 to the present' see preface (Prentice-Hall of India, 1965).
4. C. Delisle Burns, 'Political Ideals', p. 323 (OUP London, 1929).
5. *Ibid.* p. 328.
6. 'The social contract and discourses' by Jean Jacques Rousseau-translated with introduction by G. D. Cole, p. 34 (J. M. Dent and Sons, London 1938). With such observation on the character of the people Rousseau was only preparing the ground for the introduction of the 'great legislator' in the polity.
7. This oft-quoted remark of Karl Marx implies two things simultaneously : first, that ideas have their great contribution to make, almost



as great as a material factor, in changing the society and the polity ; secondly, that the masses are the real heroes in social change. As Lenin said : "Politics begin where the masses are ; not where there are thousands, but where there are millions, that is where serious politics begin." (Quoted in E. H. Carr ; *What is History*—Penguin, '64—p. 50).

8. See, I. Schapera, 'Government and Politics in Tribal Societies', p. 137 (Watts, London, 1956).
9. Napoleon found the so-called ideologists or ideologues among his opponents and referred to them in a contemptuous manner, using 'ideologue' and thus also 'ideologie' as derogatory words. See Arne Naess et al. *op. cit.* p. 150.
10. K. Marx and F. Engels, 'The German Ideology', p. 61 (Progress Pub. Moscow, 1968)—*italics original*.
11. Herbert Marcuse, 'Soviet Marxism' pp. 109-110 (Vintage books, New York, 1961)
12. Joan Robinson, 'The Cultural Revolution in China', p. 12 (Penguin, 1969).
13. S. M. Lipset quoted in an article entitled 'American Politics and the End of Ideology' by S. W. Rousseau and J. Farganis in 'The New sociology' ed. by Irving Louis Horowitz. p. 269 (OUP. N. Y. 1965). Lipset makes this observation in his book 'political man'.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Alan R. Ball, 'Modern Politics and Government', p. 253 (Papermac, 1971).
16. Sherman H. M. Chang, 'The Marxian Theory of the State', p. 36 (University of Pennsylvania, 1931).
17. G. V. Plekhanov, 'The Role of the Individual in History', p. 60. (Pragati Prakasani, Calcutta, 1973).
18. *Ibid.* p. 61,
19. E. H. Carr, 'What is History', p. 55 (Penguin, 1964).
20. See Bertrand de Jouvenal, 'The Pure Theory of Politics', p. 83 (Cambridge University Press, 1963).

## Classes and Elites in Politics

One universal and incontestable feature of politics is its groupal character. There is no sense in a man's being political all in his *own* way. Political beliefs and activities are group beliefs and activities, with varying degrees of homogeneity of the groups and with different types of impact those beliefs and activities are capable of making. Even the 'Solitaire' is a passive element in politics contributing to the growth of, or helping to subvert, a particular political faith or activity in an indirect way. And as such he too shares a politics of one group or another. In short, we can hardly conceive of politics without any conception of groups—classes, strata, elites, parties etc.

Politics, as we understand,<sup>1</sup> is concerned with State power. We get involved in politics, because the State power in its operation gets us involved in it. And with varying degrees of awareness of this 'involvement' we go into political activity. The further awareness that the nature of the involvement is similar in many cases (of individuals and institutions) well makes political activity a groupal activity. A scientific study of politics, then, demands an analysis of the character of these groups that matter.

### Class Rule or Elite Rule

According to the materialist interpretation, the groups that carry political activity are known to possess a more or less distinct class character. The growth and development of this class character well follows, what the materialist interpretation reveals, the law of human social development. And according to this law (as proclaimed in the Communist Manifesto) the history of all hitherto existing societies is the

history of class struggles. Class struggle implies the conflict between groups of human beings, each group revealing a broadly similar socio-economic character for its members. Individuals constituting a class-group have a similar or near-similar position in the social mode of production. There is no meaningful history apart from the class struggle. "What is left of history when the class concept is eliminated is but the record of insignificant trivialities."

Historical materialism, then, informs us that a meaningful account of political activity would always reveal the formation and continuation of struggles between classes. It would further reveal that when the struggle becomes hot, the state appears nakedly as the most efficient 'executive committee' of the ruling class.<sup>2</sup> The groupal activity that is politics is thus, in the main, a conflict between the ruling class and/or its allies on the one hand and other groups situated on a disadvantageous position in the mode of production on the other. The study of politics is accordingly conceived as a study of class and class struggles with its varied manifestations.

The above view of politics is, of course, hardly acceptable to the scholars in the anglo-american academic world. These scholars, when they speak of groups in politics, would speak of various types of groups having no 'class' character as such. They would rather speak of 'interest groups' and 'pressure groups'<sup>3</sup> and of groups wielding different degrees of power and influence to manipulate the state apparatus. The relative strength of the group(s) is, again, not to be measured in terms of economic power. It is also assumed that those who enjoy the more advantageous position in the economy do not necessarily win the ruling position in the polity. Political power is a different business altogether, having no direct connection with economic power. Politics is more a question of gaining 'influence' some way or other than of running along any course of 'class struggle'. As Harold Lasswell would tell us, "the study of politics is the study of influence and the influential.....The influential are

those who get the most of what there is to get. Available values may be classified as 'deference', 'income', 'safety'. Those who get the most are 'elite', the rest are 'mass'.<sup>4</sup>

The elites, even when they can be categorised on the basis of 'income' or 'economic position', would not reveal any class nature as such. Contending groups of elites may reveal almost identical economic positions and, on the other hand, members of a single elite-group may come from different economic strata. The only thing such proponents of elitism would emphasize is the rule of superior ability. The elites who rule would rule because they are elites, because they are fit to rule. The elites are "supposed to be self-made and really the victors in a fair contest".<sup>5</sup>

Elitism is primarily intended to show that the Marxist conception of 'the ruling class' is erroneous. In fact, Marx's concept of class has provided the principal source from which, by opposition, the elite theories arose. To illustrate, one may refer to the main thesis of Vilfredo Pareto who is known to have used the elite concept for the first time. This is the thesis of the continuous circulation of elites. This thesis is presented by Pareto to point out the impossibility of any formation of a stable and closed ruling class.

### On the Nature of the Elites

The elite theorists themselves, even though they reject the Marxian scheme of oppressor-oppressed relation, would divide a population into classes/strata: the ruling group and the ruled, the elite and the non-elite. The elite group is, again, sub-divided by Pareto into (a) the governing elite and (b) the non-governing elite. Another Italian writer G. Mosca also placed a theory of elite, of the ruling class, explaining the rule of the minority over the majority by the fact that the former is organised. Pareto's governing elite and Mosca's political class are, again, distinct Social groups. However, such groups are not homogeneous enough<sup>6</sup> and their political position/power is to be explained not in terms of their

economic position only, but more in terms of their ability, temperament, education etc.

According to Lasswell, the political elite is distinguished from other elites in the sense that the latter, while having social influence, is less intimately associated with the exercise of power. Lasswell, however, finds no clear index to measure influence and the influential. As he writes, "Influence is determined on the basis of shares in the values which are chosen for purposes of the analysis. Representative values are deference, safety, and income. No single index is wholly satisfactory as a gauge of influence, but situations may be classified by the successive application of specific standards. Whatever the measures utilized, attention is centered upon the characteristics of the influential which may be described in selected terms, like class, skill, personality, and attitude."<sup>7</sup> Leaving away the problem of criterion to determine 'influence', Lasswell goes on to the more common methods that elites apply in their political action. These methods, these ways of manipulating the political environment would, thinks Lasswell, determine the fate of an elite—the fate or the results of elite action being too manifest to be ignored. The methods the elites use are violence, goods, symbols, practices etc. The more important consequences (results) are revealed in skill, class, personality, attitude etc. Concentrating one's attention only on the class results of social change is thus, according to Lasswell, too narrow an approach. Lasswell would thus advise the Marxist analyst to take care of, say skill struggle rather than class struggle and thereby gain new insight as to the nature of the political process.

Another modern version of elite theory one finds in the writings of C. Wright Mills. Mills would prefer the term 'power elite' to Marx's term 'ruling class'. According to Mills, the term 'ruling class' is a "badly loaded phrase. Class is an economic term; rule is a political one. The phrase 'ruling class' thus contains the theory that an economic class rules politically.....we hold that such a simple view of



'economic determinism' must be elaborated by 'political determinism' and 'military determinism'; that the higher agents of each of these three domains now often have a noticeable degree of autonomy; and that only in the often intricate ways of coalition do they make up and carry through the most important decisions."<sup>8</sup>

Mills' power elite is thus as good or as bad, as a concept, as is Pareto's governing elite. Pareto also speaks of those who have 'power and influence' and those who have none. Mills only follows Pareto when he says, "some men are indeed much freer than others." And neither Pareto nor Mills would go deep into the historical development of human society to trace the origin and growth of this inequality of 'power and influence.'

The elitists thus place a model of a society and polity where the key political power is controlled by a political class (sometimes along with economic power and military power possessed by two such classes as conceived by Mills). This political class does not derive its power solely from economic holdings. In political struggles the group that very often emerges as the most powerful is not a class in the Marxist sense; the ruling elite is often a heterogeneous mixture of people with varied socio-economic background, but all having some superiority in some sense and hence making a group—the elite group. Such elite-group may also constitute a powerful counter-balance to weakly developed consciousness of class, and to weaker organisations based on such class-consciousness.

### **The Trouble with 'Elitism'**

The weakness of the elite theory (or theories) is evident in the tragic scarcity of any widely acclaimed application of the same. In fact we do not have, after C. W. Mills, any good example of macro level studies, of a social or political system, based on the elite model. In India as in the west some micro level studies may be found as to the 'who' and 'how' of the elite. The term elite is here interpreted as liberally as possible so as

to consider an individual as an elite having any amount of respect or significance in any sphere of life or activity. However, contrary to the conception of the elite theorists, most of the findings here reveal that the gaining of an elite position is in almost all cases supported by sound economic position. Thus one study of the Urban elite in India, in the Jodhpur city, shows, ".....a still unbroken traditional structure in as much as there were two women only and none belonged to the scheduled castes, and only one out of '80' elites was from the back-ward classes.....the Brahmin elites formed comparatively a larger proportion of the political elites.....As compared to the general population, the elite belonged to the high-income groups .....".<sup>9</sup> The primary economic motive of all the advanced caste-groups securing the elite position is also stressed in all such findings. To quote one: "Division on any ideological issue has never taken place in the history of Bihar Congress since 1946 to date....Politics became more and more personalized and the ruling leadership scrambled more for money, power and status."<sup>10</sup> Research on the composition of the rural elite would only doubly confirm the position. For, it is difficult to imagine a rural area in India where a relatively stable and powerful political group would emerge without its having any clear stance on the land question, that is without its being in an identifiable position in the rural mode of production. The Lasswellian 'skill struggle' that has no concurrence with 'landlord-peasant' class struggle, can hardly explain the politics in India's rural society. In his study of the rural elite V. M. Sirsikar remarks thus :

"The local political system is under the control of a leadership which comes from the richer peasantry which has tradition, social status, wealth and other factors on its side. The gap between the 'led' and 'leaders' is, to say the least, quite shocking from the angles of wealth, land-holdings and property".<sup>11</sup>

A macro-view of Indian politics and society will produce no different answer. Those who control the state power also

control the police, the army and the economic resources. It will be an over-simplification to argue that two or three businessmen control everything in the state. But it does not also make sense if we speak of a 'triple sovereign' as suggested by Mills, the economic, the political and the military as three autonomous establishments working as a coalition body. Nor can it make sense if, following Mosca or Pareto, one argues that men from widely divergent economic standings could develop a really functioning elite, could exercise state power as such.

The class analysis makes sense when we speak, not of this or that individual Feudal Lord or Monopolist holding political power, but, of groups of individuals and institutions suffering/enjoying a more similar position (compared to others) in the totality of the social life determined by the mode of production. So one needs to take into account the historically developing social and economic forces to explain the position of power or deprivation that an individual along with his class-group attains in the political process. Even Pareto could appreciate the need of such an analysis. Thus while considering the problems of political change, Pareto has to introduce the notion of 'social forces'—the important interests in society—as the source of new elites. And this notion of 'social forces' says Meisel, brings Pareto rather 'uncomfortably close to Marx'.<sup>12</sup> Pareto also believed that if individuals were arranged according to their degree of political and social power or influence, it would be found in most societies that the same individuals occupied the same place in the elite hierarchy (determined according to the level of intelligence, aptitude for mathematics, musical talent, moral character etc.) as in the hierarchy of wealth. "The so-called upper classes are also usually the richest. These classes represent an elite, an 'aristocracy'."<sup>13</sup>

Elite theories, then, fail to make any convincing improvement over the materialist class analysis in order to explain the groupal character of political activity. In fact, when elitism

implies the rule of superior quality only, it can hardly explain the growth of co-ordinated political activity. Politics in that case would be a process of merit-testing which is not what we find in reality. It might be argued that the class analysis is to be rejected because of its deterministic character. The charge of determinism, as we have said, grows out of an oversimplified version of the class struggle and class analysis. Moreover, since the value of Marx's concept of the ruling class depends upon the truth of his general social theory, of Historical materialism, the charge of determinism against the class analysis is redundant. (As to the charge of determinism against the general theory of Marx we have met it earlier).<sup>11</sup>

The interesting point to note is that elitism itself is deterministic; at least, the elite theories appear no less deterministic than what they want to refute, namely Marxism. As T. B. Bottomore observes, "The fundamental argument of the elite theorists is not merely that every known society has been divided into two strata—a ruling minority and a majority which is ruled—but that all societies must be so divided. In what respect is this less deterministic..."<sup>15</sup>

### **The Pluralist 'Rule of All'**

There is one group of writers, in the West, known as the democratic-pluralists, who make the most virulent attack against any idea of the predominance of a particular class in the political process, in the decision-making process, to be more precise. Not to speak of the Marxist class analysis, even the elite theory of political power is thoroughly discarded by the pluralists.

The pluralists seem to rely on a faith. A Himalayan faith they have about the democratic process in the polity, of the American polity in particular. As Robert Dahl, perhaps the best representative of the pluralist school, writes, "In the political system, all the active and legitimate groups in the population can make themselves heard at some crucial stage in the process of decision".<sup>16</sup> There cannot be any greater

tribute to the working of American democracy. And well, if a particular group informs you that it is not being heard at all, it is not the fault of American democracy; the defect must lie in the group itself, say, in its not being *legitimate enough*.

To take the pluralist argument against the elitist now. The presence of elites is not denied. But the elites are never cohesive. And, of course, the concept of power elite is unmeaning. For, elites too are plural. As one writer summarises the pluralist position on this question: "There are *elites*, but there is no *elite*".<sup>17</sup>

The pluralists thus argue that power in society remain diffused. The multitude of conflicting pressures from organised groups and interests cannot show any marked leaning towards one as against the other(s). Politics reveals conflict; but then, according to this view politics is also a process of accommodating and reconciling conflicts.

Writers like prof. Dahl would argue against the class approach by simply telling us that he does not find any specific evidence that economic power is a decisive element in the determination of policy. However, as Ralph Miliband informs us, at one point Prof. Dahl himself suggests that those who are 'notables' or 'influential' are well capable of affecting the decisions which touch upon business: and that is because politicians are wary of their (i.e. the notables) potential influence and hence they would avoid policies that might incite the Notables in bitter opposition.<sup>18</sup> This concession to the 'influence' of the Notables (of economic power to be more precise) is enough to kill the 'faith' of the pluralist-democrat, we believe. It is no use denying the fact that persons having enough of wealth, of economic power, will have an easier entry into the more respected levels of society including the level of political power. While one may question the elite theory for its being never clear as to the actual nature and composition of the elite, it is absurd to take the so-called pluralist view that would allow all and sundry a real



say in political decision-making.

The elitist regards power as cumulative. For the pluralist, however, there is no interest in the society that can weigh too heavily upon the state. The pluralists find only competing blocs of interests, the competition ensuring a power-balance. Power, wealth, status etc., are all found apart in the pluralist world. Such over-compartmentalisation, to say the least, is 'methodologically misleading'.<sup>19</sup>

The elitists appear better poised in their debate with the pluralists. The elitists show greater practical sense as they point out the normal tendency of minority rule in every polity, the tendency of power getting concentrated in the hands of the few in the political process. It cannot be otherwise. C. Wright Mills thus emphatically puts the elite position vis-a-vis the pluralists: "The assertions of American political scientists that freedom and democratic values are safeguarded in the USA by the existence of a plurality of elites competing for popular support are shown up to be part of liberal myth. It is the concentration of elite power, not its diffusion which is the major clue to our condition".<sup>20</sup>

The elitists, however, do not make much sense as we find most of them unwilling to decipher the sources of political power: They take political power *qua* political power as the determining force in history. Moreover, they also make a prediction on the inevitability of the hierarchical structure of society for all time to come. The elitists thereby discount all efforts on the part of human beings to eliminate the forms and consequences of inequality in and through the political process.

### **Political Activity Through Class-Groupings**

Historical materialism tells us that political institutions and the different forms of political activity are all rooted in a clash of interests which, in turn, are the outgrowth of the material and social conditions of society. Marxism is unique in its unequivocal emphasis on the historical and dialectical

root of all political processes. And this Marxian position is being respected by an increasing number of scholars. Sidney Hook rightly appreciates, "Modern historiography, even when it is not avowedly Marxist, reflects the profound impact of Marx's ideas albeit in a diluted form.....Even so Christian an historian as Professor Butterfield pays tribute to the wholesome effect of Marx's approach on historical scholarship".<sup>21</sup>

When Marx says that the state is the executive committee of the dominant economic class, he only recognises the role of classes in political and social life and emphasises the dominant role of the owners of the means of production in the whole political process. The phrase 'executive committee' need not be taken too literally. It is only intended to imply that if the political decision makers (i. e. the executive committee) can always avoid the control of the dominant economic class, then the functioning of the economy and the society as a whole will be subject to continuous frustration. And such a situation cannot continue for a long time. A new class, a new group of decision makers, well under the control of the more consciously organised dominant economic class would now seize political power replacing the old, recalcitrant executive committee.

The new executive committee and its mentor, the dominant economic class, may themselves also get replaced. Such a possibility may be opened through class struggles. The masses of the population having most to gain from removing all restrictions placed upon the productive forces (restrictions imposed by the dominant class) may join that organised struggle for a revolutionary overthrow of the regime concerned. We may quote Engels here to note that the struggle between classes constitute the essence of political struggles. Says Engels. "Society creates for itself an organ for the safeguarding of its common interests against internal and external attacks. This organ is the state power. Hardly come into being, this organ makes itself independent vis-a-vis society; and, indeed, the more so, the more it becomes the organ of a

particular class, the more it directly enforces the supremacy of that class. The fight of the oppressed class against the ruling class becomes *necessarily a political fight*, a fight first of all against the political dominance of this class".<sup>22</sup> (Italics mine) Let us add that the more active participants in this political fight are well aware of the *interconnection* between political groupings and their economic basis ; only the more *intelligent* non-participants like the elitists, pluralists and such others fail miserably to reflect this in their consciousness.

### Notes and References

1. See Supra, Chapter III.
2. See 'The Communist Manifesto' (with explanatory notes by D. Ryazanoff) p. 28. (Radical Book Club. 1972). See also 'Ryazanoff's note' on p. 81.
3. For our present purpose we will not have any detailed discussion on 'interest groups' and 'pressure groups'. We keep the study of such groups for the next Chapter.
4. Harold Lasswell, 'Politics : Who gets what, when, how'. p. 13. (Meridian Books, Inc. New York. 1958).
5. See Herbert Aptheker, 'The nature of democracy, freedom and revolution'. p. 57, (International Publishers, N. Y. 1969). This basic assumption of elitism, Aptheker has rightly observed, constitutes one important foundation of the Bourgeois concept of Freedom and Democracy.
6. The elitists are not, of course, of one opinion concerning the lack of homogeneity in the elite-group. G. Mosca seems to be more aware of the heterogeneity of the elite.

For a comprehensive study of the elite theorists we refer to :

T. B. Bottomore, *Elites and Society*. (Penguin Books, 1964) and Geraint Parry, *Political Elites*, (George Allen and Unwin, 1970).

7. H. Lasswell, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-27.
8. See, T. B. Bottomore—*op. cit.*, pp. 32-33.
9. Sheo Kumar Lal, 'The Urban Elite'. pp. 129-30. (Thomson Press, Delhi, 1974).

10. Shashishekhar Jha, 'Political Elite in Bihar'. p. 99. (Vora & Co., Bombay, 1972).
11. V. M. Sirsikar, 'The Rural Elite in a developing society'. p. 185. (Orient Longmans, New Delhi, 1970).
12. Quoted in Bottomore. *op. cit.* p. 32.  
See also Mills' essay on "The structure of power in American Society" in 'Power, Politics & People' (The collected essays of C. Wright Mills—Ed. by I. L. Horowitz.—Ch. I,—OUP, London, 1967).
13. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
14. See, *Supra*. Chapter II.
15. Bottomore, *op. cit.* p. 19.
16. Quoted in Ralph Miliband, 'The State in Capitalist society'. p. 2-3. (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1969).
17. See Ralph Miliband, *op. cit.* p. 172.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 173.
19. See G. Parry, *op. cit.* p. 71.
20. Quoted in *Ibid.* p. 54.
21. Sidney Hook, 'Marx and Marxists'. p. 36. (Eurasia pub. 1966).
22. F. Engels, "Ludwig Feuerbach. . . ." *op. cit.* p. 49.



## On Parties and Pressure Groups

Parties and pressure Groups constitute the two major organised forms that facilitate political activity in modern states. Pressure groups might have existed at all times and in all places. Attempts on the part of vested interests to secure/manipulate favour from those who are in power may be noted at all periods of history. (In modern times such interest groups are surely getting larger in number, using more sophisticated techniques to place their demands). But Parties, in the form of more or less permanent organizations with formal structures and rules of functioning, are no doubt products of modern democracy. There is no doubt that the development of parliamentary governments and the growth of election procedures have contributed to the emergence of the modern party systems.

### The Dialectics of Party Activity

The significance of party organization, we can say, is well associated with three clear developments in human social life :

a) the growing number of secondary human relationships for the satisfaction of *like* interests ;

b) the increasing consciousness that the satisfaction of most of our interests is ultimately related with political power and

c) the ever widening realisation that more formal and powerful aggregations are needed to utilise political power.

If the first factor provides the necessary base for political parties, the last two factors provide the motive force and the rationale for such political organizations.

The groupal character of politics, as we have considered earlier, is revealed through the growth and struggle of classes and elite groups.<sup>1</sup> But such classes and groups need more formal structures and organizations to carry out their activities.



Political parties are such structures representing contending class/group interests and acting as the best instrument to wage battles between classes and groups.

The object of political parties is power. Parties endeavour to hold office in the power institutions in the country concerned. They need such offices of power to implement policies that would satisfy the interests they represent. The interests are those of social classes and groups. And a social class or group cannot win power, cannot work, so to say, with its amorphous and unwieldy structure : and hence the need of political parties.

It is, of course, an oversimplification to contend that all political parties everywhere represent more or less clear class interests. But it is also historically true that a political party cannot secure power, cannot thrive meaningfully for a long time or fight any significant political battle, if it cannot secure the strong backing of a social class interest. Moreover, while a more or less similar class interest may be represented by a number of political groups, a single political party worth reckoning cannot provide free rooms within itself for widely divergent and contending class interests. As Maurice Cornforth rightly observes, "Parties are not necessarily formed with the open intention of promoting the interests of any one class. But they can be neither stable nor long lasting *except* as political organizations of a class".<sup>2</sup>

It may be asked how an organisation like the Congress party of India could bring within its fold people of different classes, from big business down to the poorest peasant well on an all-India basis ? Or that how could such a wide variety of Marxist parties thrive in India all claiming to represent the proletarian class interest ? The answer, if not as easy as to be delivered in a single sentence, is not very difficult to conceive either. First, one is to take into account the objective class condition of the different categories of people that constitute the membership of the organisation concerned. Secondly, one must consider the subjective class position that the people

consciously hold or unconsciously subscribe to. The objective class condition of a poor worker is no bar to his entry into a pettybourgeois type of political organisation if his subjective class position (that is, the class interest he consciously or unconsciously adheres to) *is not* that of upholding the rule of the working class. On the other hand, an alien class position consciously cultivated (hence possessing subjectively) may allow, say a petty-bourgeois, to move away from his objective class condition and work for, say, a working-class party. As to the plethora of working-class parties that are found existing in a particular country one may easily find that not all of them are by any count serious organisations. Even when two or three such Marxist parties are found enjoying a considerable span of life, the dialectics of their working may reveal how near, or how far from, the working-class interest they are.

The dialectics of the working of a political party and of the shifts in a party's membership structure can be ignored only to increase the widening confusion among the students of politics concerning the relation between political parties and class interests. The scientific approach of historical materialism in the study of politics shows that no significant party activity can remain unaffected by the basic contradictions between the social classes.

Parties frame policies, bring into public certain ideas and fight different issues. These are social policies and ideas and the fight reveals social contradictions. Any significant political battle, say on land reform or the question of minimum wage, would reveal this social contradiction in the level of party ideas and policies. A question like the structuring of the general education system may not easily reveal the class standpoint of the parties. For, the contradictions emerging out of the relation between a particular pattern of education and the pattern of social stratification may not be easily conceived. Hence on such issues parties with widely divergent class interests may not be able to place their policies consistently enough. But on plainer issues, on more basic

issues like the abolition of the Zamindari system or the nationalisation of foreign concerns the class standpoint of the parties become clear. On such issues the dialectics of party working is visible enough. Thus one can explain why one party can speak for wholesale nationalisation (while not in power), or why another party (in power) would be dithery enough in formulating a policy for the abolition of landed property or in introducing a thorough scheme of collective farming. A *labour* party (in power) that would hardly attempt to emancipate labour in real terms well reveals a subjective class position that is alien to 'labour', an inner contradiction between the objective and subjective class position of its leaders and followers and, above all, the contradiction with other working-class parties and ideologies showing that its commitment to the cause of labour is not genuine. Again, a Marxist party not in power and yet trying *anyhow* to gain power, making compromises with alien interests at random, making shifts to the extremist and the reformist politics now and then, would also reveal the same contradictions of its leaders and followers—the contradiction between objective and subjective class positions.

The dialectics of party functioning thus refers to all those processes of conflict, conciliation, adjustment and contradiction between the party leadership and the followers, between the nature of party organization and the nature of party programmes, between parties with widely divergent structures and ideologies, between the party in power and others outside, between parties with near-similar policies and ideologies, between regional parties and national parties and above all between the subjective and the objective social position(s) of the leaders and the cadres. Taking any one party and pursuing its functioning through all these processes of contradictions, a serious student of politics will unmistakably find the dialectics providing the answer to the character and significance of the party concerned. And in this way as he pursues the working processes of other parties, big and small, regional

and national, he will no doubt arrive at a clearer picture of the interconnection between the class struggles and the political struggles in the country as a whole.

### **Party-Politics and the Complexity of Social life**

Parties, while waging political struggles, proclaim all kinds of principles, ideals and universal ends. But, in practice, we find most of them pursuing particular sectional interests. In his "The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" Karl Marx points out this contradiction between 'proclaimed principles' and 'actually pursued policies' among French political parties during the 1848 struggles. We cannot resist here quoting one inimitable description given by Marx on parties and men in France at that period : 'The period that we have before us comprises the most motley mixture of crying contradictions : constitutionalists who conspire openly against the Constitution ; revolutionists who are confessedly constitutional ; a National Assembly that wants to be omnipotent and always remains parliamentary..... ..a republic that is nothing but the combined infamy of two monarchies, the Restoration and the July Monarchy, with an imperial label—alliances whose first proviso is separation ; struggles whose first law is indecision : wild, inane agitation in the name of tranquility, most solemn preaching of tranquility in the name of revolution ; passions without truth, truths without passion ; heroes without heroic deeds, history without events ; development whose sole driving force seems to be the calendar,..... ..antagonisms that periodically seem to work themselves upto a climax only to lose their sharpness and fall away without being able to resolve themselves ;.....'³ The above picture, we are sure, cannot be so foreign to a modern student of politics. Parties and men in to-day's world (especially in what we call the third world) are producing a very similar picture in their political struggles.

The representation of sectional interests under the cover of universal principles and welfare policies is done by many parties well including those having no mean mass base,

This reveals the inability of the masses to develop their 'consciously formulated' demands. Guided by vested interests, the clever leadership retains its position by procuring certain apparently attractive, though ephemeral, sectional gains for the ordinary cadres and followers. A successful, strong and well respected political party is one that is capable of putting, consistently enough, its class-oriented demands/policies.

Class-oriented demands are not just any demand supported by a number of members of a particular class. As it has been rightly said: "...a class standpoint in ideas is not the mere echo of the ideas which most members of a class happen to entertain at a particular time and place. A class standpoint in ideas means developing ideas in conformity with the objective requirements of the class for developing its way of life, its means of livelihood."<sup>4</sup>

Classes and class standpoints are there. But people get deceived sometimes by the leader-manipulators occupying the higher echelon in the party structure and distorting the class standpoint. But in most cases it is the inability of the leaders and followers to get through the social contradictions that makes it difficult to present the class standpoint properly. After all, social life is not as simple as to produce a picture of clear contradiction out of an open and direct fight between just two sets of people and parties.

Innumerable changes occur in a man's life, innumerable shifts in his interest-alignments. From minute differences to extremely wide differences in income, family status, friendship circle, educational position, incidental developments in personal life, cultural milieu and in many other apparently insignificant elements, may contribute to the highly confusing and inconsistent role of the people and their parties. It is for these reasons, again, that we cannot find a political party always and at all times putting its specific class demands only; and it is for this changing life and character of the members and the leaders that we may often find a party posing contradictory class ideas.



Classes are historical realities ; and the various political parties, as Gramsci writes, are their 'nomenclature'. Gramsci, again, rightly tells us that political parties rarely, if ever, represent one class totally and exclusively and that a party stands for its class under "certain given conditions".<sup>5</sup>

From all that we have noted above we can realise how difficult it is to study the growth and nature of a political party. It is surely not as easy as Roberto Michels would reveal—just getting the iron law of oligarchy—the one inevitable trend that we must discover in the working of any political party.

"To write the history of a political party", says Gramsci, "it is really necessary to face up to a whole series of problems, much less simple ones than Roberto Michels, for example, believes....."<sup>6</sup> In his study on political parties, Michels writes about the inevitability of oligarchy in party life and about the difficulties which the growth of this oligarchy imposes upon the realization of democracy. Michels claims that his theory is strikingly confirmed in the political life of all the leading belligerent nations immediately before the outbreak of war and during the progress of the struggle. "The political party", writes Michels, "has its own peculiar soul, independent of the programmes and rules which it possesses and the eternal principles with which it is imbued. The psychology of the crowd is fairly the same in the socialists and the nationalists, in the liberals and the conservatives.....Our consistent knowledge of the political life of the principal civilized nations of the world authorizes us to assert that the tendency toward oligarchy constitutes one of the historic necessities, one of the iron laws of history, from which the most democratic modern societies, the most advanced parties, have been unable to escape".<sup>7</sup> Michels has made references to technical, administrative, psychological and intellectual factors—all combining to produce the oligarchical control by the party leadership. These factors and this Aristocratic tendency will develop, thinks Michels, whenever the need of organisation is felt. "Every

party or professional union becomes divided into a minority of directors and majority of directed".<sup>8</sup>

Michels' defect lies in his oversimplification of the problem. For, even if we take for granted this general tendency of oligarchical control, this does not exhaust all the knowledge we require about political parties. In the study of a political party, a larger and more comprehensive framework (than what Michels would have) will have to be taken. As Gramsci tells us, "it will be necessary to take account of the social group of which the given party is the expression and the most advanced part : the history of a party, in other words, must be the history of a particular group. But this group is not isolated ; it has friends, allies, opponents and enemies. Only from the complex picture of social and state life (often with international ramifications) will emerge the history of a certain party. It .....means in fact to write the general history of a country from a monographic point of view,.....A party will have greater or less significance and weight, precisely to the extent to which its particular activity has weighed more or less in determining the history of a country".<sup>9</sup>

Modern writers in the west claim to have developed new approaches in the study of politics that would help us understand the potential roles of parties and party systems for 'initiating, managing and consolidating, dynamic political change and development'. But as we go through these 'modern' approaches we find hardly any explanation concerning those vital and necessary interconnections and contradictions that the parties have with the social infrastructure.<sup>10</sup> The context of a changing mode of production and the changing life of the people is utterly missing in these approaches ; hitherto these modern writers cannot explain the widely divergent role and character of political parties in the modern world in a space-time context. The narrow, particularistic attitude that the 'modern' writer reveals in his study on the growth and development of political parties makes his approach inadequate. Thus, in most of the recent studies the growth of

political parties is considered as something of a result of elite manoeuvre, as innovations, so to say, to tackle the growing 'anger' of people. As Joseph Lapalombara and Myron Weiner maintain ; .....the political party emerges whenever the activities of a political system reach a certain degree of complexity, or whenever the notion of political power comes to include the idea that the mass public must participate or be controlled.<sup>11</sup> So the rationale behind the growth of parties lies not, as we have noted earlier, in the necessity for the struggling forces in society to secure an instrument (that the party organisation is) for gaining power and waging political battles, but rather in the urgency felt by the elites to please/pacify the people by allowing them some scope for participation in politics. So following such 'modern' version one might consider it irrelevant to take account of the social forces and contradictions, say, in the growth and formation of the Indian National Congress in the last quarter of the 19th century. One would rather consider the formation of the 'Congress' as a result of elite manoeuvring—Congress as a creation of the British agent Mr. Hume working with a few Indian intellectuals. To quote Lapalombara and Weiner again, "The emergence of a political party clearly implies that the masses must be taken into account by the political elite, either out of a commitment to the ideological notion that the masses have a right to participate in the determination of public policy or the selection of leadership, or out of the realisation that even a rigidly dictatorial elite must find the organisational means of assuring stable conformance and control".<sup>12</sup>

In the 'modern' view, then, party organisations are tactical organisations ; politics through parties considered as a matter of expediency only. This is viewing the party organisation as a contrivance intended to provide a taste of power to the masses so that they do not slip past the elite domination. W. H. Morris. Jones betrays such a puerile view of party organisation when, he prescribes a reliance on 'loose reins' <sup>13</sup>

(organizationally) for the nation-wide political organizations in India.

Maurice Duverger seems to have conceived better when he writes, "Each nation, each country, each civilization gives to the class struggle, to individual conflicts and resistance to power their individual character."<sup>14</sup> But while studying the structural aspect of political parties he only anticipates Lapalombara and others. He would discuss the evolution of cadre parties and mass parties arguing on the way that the distinction between the two "corresponds to a difference in social and political substructure."<sup>15</sup> But while he notes a general trend towards the growth of mass parties (especially with the coming of universal suffrage), he finds it difficult in practice to get cadre party or a mass party in pure form. And in any case while resolving the problem of the development of mass parties he would take the same 'modern' view. Thus he writes : "The problem was how to give the masses some scope for political activity and how to confer on the not abilities composing the caucus the air of having been popularly invested."<sup>16</sup> So like the more recent writers Duverger would also only discover the manipulative function of the elite in the emergence of political parties. And like Michels again he would maintain that the leadership of parties "tends naturally to assume oligarchic form."<sup>17</sup>

One great defect of these 'modern' western writers lies in their total incompetence to appreciate the nature and working of single-party states. These writers find no difference between single party systems of Fascist states and the one party system of socialist countries. Thus S. Neumann, one of the more respected authorities on the subject, writes : "A one party system is a contradiction in itself. Only the coexistence of at least one other competitive group makes a political party real."<sup>18</sup> The term party is still used in the 'dictatorial' regimes only to keep, as Neumann thinks, "the semblance of a peoples rule". It follows, then, a 'real' peoples rule can be found only in the states like U. K. or U. S. A. But as we know

very well in many of such 'real' democracies the party division is no division at all, the Bi-party or Multi-party systems very well providing scope for a dictatorial control by the ruling party. Mr. Neumann himself would accept this position in a roundabout way (and yet thereby contradicting his earlier position just noted) when he says, "The strength of the Anglo-American party system is founded largely upon a basic national unity which makes the differentiations of political groups differences in degree but not in kind".<sup>19</sup>

### On the Role of Pressure Groups

As distinguished from party organisations pressure groups are those more or less organised aggregates always trying to influence the decision makers and never making any effort to capture the seat of power. As to the type of pressure groups one writer correctly tells us that they "range from powerful employer organisations and trade unions operating at the national level, to small and relatively weak local civic groups trying to improve local amenities".<sup>20</sup>

It is difficult to agree with Duverger when he says, "most pressure groups are non-political organizations whose primary activity is not concerned with influencing the authorities in power".<sup>21</sup> A study of the behaviour of the business groups, trade unions and such other pressure groups will, however, reveal that even in a relatively new polity like India the connections of those groups with the authorities are close enough. The intimate relation of the pressure groups with party work, election, etc. can be observed in many other countries. Business groups, in particular, enjoy this intimacy using their resource (that is money) to influence the seat of power. Thus business finances elections as it also finances party meetings and conventions. Even castes and caste associations as interest groups maintain clear political activities to gain influence and advantage.

Mr. Duverger, however, admits: ".....purely political action is difficult to distinguish from other types of action. A



strike set in motion by a trade union is sometimes political ; sometimes economic and often both at the same time".<sup>22</sup> In fact without establishing strong links with the political forces the pressure groups cannot expect to achieve what they demand. And such links will in course of time eliminate the so-called non-political character of the pressure groups. Again, party organisations, in their turn, may encourage the formation of pressure groups. Such groups may constitute the mass fronts necessary for widening the party base as also for recruitment of new organisers/leaders and above all for securing newer sources of finance.

The 'modern' writers cannot appreciate this very normal position of pressure groups working in close contact with the political parties. Thus Almond and Powell maintain, ".....the subordination of interest groups by political parties may limit the mobility of the process, create monopolies in the 'political market', and even stalemate the political system."<sup>23</sup> Thus the protagonists of the developmental approach feel obsessed at the sight of a single party (like the communist party) gaining over-all control in a polity. The idea of democratic political activity that these writers possess is that of the so-called *free* operation of any and every interest group no matter whether one such group brings a demand for the continuation of 'privy purse', another group for unrestricted operation of 'foreign banks' and so on. Even if all such *free* developments create an anarchic condition in the country, these writers may still call it democratic enough. If, on the other hand, a particular class with the help of its vanguard party could seize power and eliminate all forces (including such interest groups) that perpetuate division and exploitation in society, it will be simply identified as a totalitarian, undemocratic political system.

The intensification of social and political struggles by well organised and well directed political parties and pressure groups is what our modern writers are mortally afraid of. They can best conceive of political activities that bring compromises and reconciliations, that would minimise social struggles and would

develop the ways of what they call 'system maintenance'. A radical change in the society and the polity is what they do not understand or care for. But such changes do occur in all societies ; radical transformations in the society and polity are still occurring well despite these writers.

History is replete with records of great political changes. And on this question of political change we turn next.

### Notes and References

1. We do not consider classes and elites as two different, unrelated, human groupings. We conceive elites as elites of different classes— elite conflict as conflict between the more important sections of the contending classes.
2. M. Cornforth, 'The open philosophy and the open society', p. 173. (International publishers, 1970).
3. Karl Marx, 'The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte', p. 34. (Progress publishers, Moscow, 1967).
4. M. Cornforth—*op. cit.* p. 176.
5. See J. M. Cammett, 'Antonio Gramsci and the origins of Italian Communism', p. 193. (Stanford, California ; 1967)
6. Antonio Gramsci, 'The modern prince & other writings', p. 148. (International publishers, 1957).
7. Roberto Michels—Article entitled 'The sociological character of political parties' in "The theories of Society" Ed, by Talcott Parsons et al. p. 606. (The Freepress of Glencoe, 1961).
8. R. Michels, 'Political parties', p. 32. First published in 1911. (Dover publications, N. Y. 1959).
9. A. Gramsci—*op. cit.* pp. 148-149.
10. For a good review of the more recent models on party system and politics, see S. L. Datta Gupta—Contemporary studies on the Indian party system: An evaluative account (CESSSC, Occasional paper no. 7 mimeo).
11. J. Lapalombara and M. Weiner (ed.), 'Political parties and political development', p. 3 (Princeton. N. J. 1966).
12. *Ibid.* p. 4.

13. W. H. Morris-jones, 'The Government and politics of India', p. 167. (Hutchinson, London, 1971 edition).
14. M. Duverger, 'The idea of politics', p. 88 (Gateway edition, U. S. A. 1966).
15. M. Duverger, 'Political parties' (extract reproduced in 'Comparative Government' ed. by J. Blondel, p. 79—Macmillan, 1969).
16. *Ibid.* p. 80.
17. *Ibid.* 105.
18. S. Neumann, 'Modern political parties' (from the extract in J. Blondel, *op. cit.* p. 69).
19. *Ibid.* p. 71.
20. Alan Ball, 'Modern politics and government', p. 103. (Macmillan, 1971).
21. M. Duverger, 'The idea of politics', p. 117.
22. *Ibid.*
23. G. Almond and G. Powell, 'Comparative politics, a developmental approach', p. 79. (Amerind publishing co. 1966).

## On Political Change

Rapidly changing nature of human ailments constitute a constant challenge to the Physicians and the Medical Sciences. The challenge posed by the ever-changing nature of human social and political institutions can only be more nagging and formidable to the social analyst and the Social Sciences. The increasing complexity of the ailments has not, of course, deterred medical research in finding out newer ways and methods of fighting out the ailments. In social science research, however, attempts to face the nature and problems of change do not appear remarkable enough.

It is true as institutions change always, one cannot expect any "once-for-all" model to explain social and political change, just as no medical scientist would ever venture to discover a "panacea" or "Cure-all" to combat all disease. But, then, the untiring effort to find newer solutions/cures that characterises medical science, is regretfully absent in the case of social sciences including political science.

The study of political change, in particular, suffers from serious neglect. In most political science study/research, the subject of "change" is being relegated to the list of "least attention". And on the top of it, there we have the much vaunted structural—functional approach and the "system-maintenance" objective that would, *ipso facto*, make the study of political change insignificant if not unmeaning. And yet the fact remains that political institutions and systems change no less significantly than the changes in our ailments.

### The Meaning of Political Change

No political process constitutes such a rich field for political analysis as is that of political change in general and the process of revolution in particular. Let us try, at the outset, to

get a broad, general, meaning of the process called political change. We may also note, in the first place, that while the term "Political change" is to be distinguished from the term "Social change", the former can never imply a process wholly independent of the latter. We rather need to assert emphatically that there cannot be a meaningful understanding of any political change if we don't take into account the social changes constituting the background as well as the social changes corresponding.

Now, what is change after all? Ordinarily, we understand by the term 'Change' certain alterations in the condition or quality of anything—certain variation or transmutation. When we speak of political change we do speak of such alterations or variations in political forms and activities.

In a general social analysis change ('Social Change') refers to all the historical variations in human societies. Social change may thus imply a change in social structure 'or in particular social institutions or in the relationship between the institutions'. All such variations/change imply 'significant' alterations. An alteration cannot be called significant if it does not connote a clear shift in People's ideas and activities. A shift, for example, of a particular individual member of a family from, say, Dacca to Calcutta does not constitute so much a social change of any significance as to invite the attention of a social analyst. But the influx of Refugees from say Bangladesh to West Bengal does constitute a change of Great Social significance.

The meaning of Political change is to be conceived in the sense outlined above. Here also our problem can be explained with simple illustrations. Thus, the defeat of, say, one particular member of a ruling party does not generally constitute so much of a political change worth serious attention. But a change from, say, Congress rule to the rule of the United Front and again to Congress rule (as it actually happened in West Bengal during the late 60's) does constitute a political change worth studying. So a meaningful and significant alteration—



variation in the quantitative and qualitative aspects of a political situation—constitutes the problem of political change.

These alterations and variations, in political forms, ideas and activities, that we call political change can be slow (sometimes not easily perceptible) or rapid and even radical/revolutionary. That is, political change implies (a) slow or rapid alterations in the different parts of political system and it may also imply (b) a revolutionary change of the political system itself. It is this latter type of change that is hardly recognised or analysed by many of our modern political scientists. Indeed, some modern writers would not consider a change of the system to be anything real. They would argue that what we find as a change *of* the system itself is actually a change *in* the system, a more thorough adjustment and readjustment of the different political structures and institutions of the system. We may take up such views later. For the time being we may say that the meaning of political change is revealed through an understanding of the alterations and variations in certain forms, ideas and activities like the following :

(a) Governmental structures and functions—For example, the centralising tendency in most federal states or, say, the ascendancy of the executive in many modern political systems.

(b) Political parties and pressure groups—For example, the virtual elimination of political parties in Bangladesh or, say, the weakening of pressure groups like the trade Unions in India.

(c) Political culture and ideologies—For example, the rapid growth of different varieties of socialism and Democracy after the 2nd World War.

(d) Political movements—For example, the sporadic or organised movements concerning social and economic issues that we observe in different countries or, say, a near-revolutionary movement like Students' movement in France in May 1968.

(e) Revolutions like that in America (1776), in France (1789/1871), in Russia (1917), in China (1949) etc.

### Study of Change : Different Approaches

Not all writers, as we have said, not all political theories, explain political change with any comprehensive formulation. One may understand those earlier thinkers who could not experience or anticipate such great upheavals as had been occurring since the days of the French Revolution that destroyed the ancient regime.<sup>1</sup> But even during the last two hundred years we do not find many giving a serious attention to the subject of Political Change. On the Contrary, in more recent times we find some brazen and deliberate omission of this subject in the otherwise voluminous writings in politics. Some writers again while admitting the need of studying political change would in reality devote little space for any detailed treatment of the process concerned.

David Easton, for example, admits that the "really crucial problems of social research are concerned with the patterns of change".<sup>2</sup> And he also regrets much for one great malaise in contemporary political science research, namely, its preoccupation with conditions of stability. But strangely enough, Easton himself does not work out any dynamic model to explain the processes of historical change. He would rather retain the idea of equilibrium as a necessary foundation of his conceptual framework. Easton finds in the earlier theories of historical change (like that of Marx) only "uninspired philosophies of history." A notion of equilibrium, suggesting that "the elements of the political process have a real tendency to hang together", perhaps appears more inspiring to Easton. The fact is, Eastonians may at best accept changes in the institutions and partial structures within the system. But their systems analytic approach (and the input-output model) is in no way meant for appreciating revolutionary transformations of the system itself.<sup>3</sup> The Political system is to remain, constantly striving towards equilibrium (a moving equilibrium) through the continuous distribution of power and authoritative allocation of values. The system is not to "burst asunder."

But revolutions do occur. And the Eastonians are, of

course, aware of such great changes. However, they would tell us that what we call revolutionary changes are only shifts in the equilibrium point in the political system. Thus a change, say, from Czardom to socialist Russia, is only a movement to a new equilibrium point.<sup>4</sup> The systems approach finds no meaning in considering such changes as the "replacement" of a political system by a *new* and *higher* one.

Of all political theories, Historical Materialism no doubt provides the clearest and the most comprehensive explanation of political change. That the study of change will comprise the most important aspect, that Historical materialism may reveal, becomes evident in that famous saying of Karl Marx : "The Philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways ; the point, however, is to *change* it." (Italics original).<sup>5</sup>

No political analyst worth the name, however, can avoid reflecting on political change even while not admitting the need to work out the dynamics of revolution. Hitherto, before we take up the more comprehensive explanation, that Historical materialism can provide, we may briefly present the explanation of political change as can be gathered from those writers who give relatively less attention to the problem. We may group such writers into the following categories :

(i) The Functionalists of different types : (This group including writers like D. Easton, G. Almond and others).

(ii) The political Sociologists presenting the so-called "cleavage-consensus" model : (For example, S.M. Lipset.)

(iii) The 'Modernization' theorists : (For example, D. Apter, S. P. Huntington, etc.)

We will find that in all these theories and approaches the process of conflict is recognised as the formidable one in the study of Political change. The Process of conflict operates at various levels, and in different degrees, between different elements and variables in the political system. Attempts to reconcile conflicts and contradictions are also found to operate. But such attempts never become successful in eliminating conflicts within the Political system. Such things

are noted by all—the Marxists and non-Marxists alike. The problems concerning the source of political conflict, the direction of the process of conflict and above all, the nature of Political Change are what constitute the points of departure. And here the dialectical method and the law of contradiction that the materialist interpretation is to work upon well empowers it to offer the most distinctively different explanation of political change.

### **The Functionalist Position**

We refer to the functionalists first. Functionalism is a way of explaining and investigating political phenomena. It explains the functions performed by this or that element/structure in the political system. It also investigates the nature of particular functions, say, that of interest articulation or political socialization and the relation of these functions with particular structures like the political party or the trade union. And for such explanations and investigations the functionalists make use of certain concepts and would also develop a model revealing a coherent conceptual framework. Three concepts, viz. System, structure and function, constitute the major part in the functionalist model. The model (technically placed in an 'input-output' framework) considers the whole study of political science as a study of the political system (or systems). And the political system is composed of so many structures and sub-structures all performing in their own form and capacities their respective functions that would go on maintaining the system at different levels.<sup>6</sup>

In his investigation, the functionalist is to observe the extent of adequate and satisfactory functioning of the different parts/structures in the system concerned. But in such observation the internal contradictions of the elements are not noted. The possible directions of the contradictions between classes and groups that constitute the base of the different political structures are not analysed. Hitherto what may appear as a satisfactory functioning on the surface is often taken to be

the real and inherent nature of functioning of the part concerned. The sharpening of contradictions or the sudden turn of contradictions into a newer level would easily change the capabilities and effectiveness of political structures like political parties or the legislatures. The Functionalists do not keep track with these changing functions and significance of political forces and structures as they are not engaged in an understanding of the ever moving Socio-economic interests and aggregations that work behind those forces and structures. They accept whatever appears on the surface. As one author rightly remarks, ".....there might be a presumption that functions at the time of the observation are adequate, and hence that the government is adequate if it is performing those functions satisfactorily. Hence the method is not likely to be popular with normativists and progressives."<sup>7</sup>

Apart from the problem of discerning an 'adequate' functioning that is apparent, from an 'adequate' functioning that is real, there remains the important question of the meaning of 'adequacy' when we do not have a clear vision about what the 'functioning' is aimed at. A study of politics becomes meaningful when we assess (a) in the first place, where the political processes are leading to? and (b) secondly, what sort of functioning could adequately lead the process towards a goal, an objective, that is 'desired'? In systems analysis the two questions are not differentiated. The observed tendency of the political process is considered, *ipso facto*, as a functioning 'adequate' (that is, necessary) for the maintenance of the system. So any existing position of a political system (i.e. the observed tendency) is easily linked up with the one objective (set once for all) of 'System maintenance'. This thoroughly conservative ideology of 'Status quo' that systems analysis carries forward also implies a strong *deterministic* bias. We are required to note that all roads, all functions, all functioning structures are leading *inevitably* towards one and only goal, that is 'System-maintenance.

There is no need to decipher and discover the basic forces



that may cause such movement well ; that inevitable tendency towards system-maintenance must be the work of a *Grand design* ! The Functionalists thus become determinists of the worst variety, of the metaphysical type.

The political system is envisaged as a conflict-surviving and conflict-transforming mechanism. Peoples' demands are always changing, and conflicting demands may develop. But all such demand, according to the Functionalist, would get converted into decisions (i.e. outputs or authoritative allocation of values) through different processes of sifting and arrangement. The decisions are, again, communicated back (the feedback process) to the people through different channels. Fresh and newer demands are created and newer forms of support placed. The whole process is repeated, in this way, *ad infinitum*. Thus the functionalist keeps *faith* in all these conversion function and Feedback mechanism to keep the political system intact.<sup>8</sup>

Systems analysis, in its way, recognises change. Changes imply conflicts. And our functionalists recognise conflicts too as natural occurrences. But then, there is no 'basic' conflict. There cannot be anything called 'fundamental' forces at work ! And we must note that all conflicts may be dealt with by what they call, the "functionally-oriented structures" in the system. The idea of replacement of the political system is thus made nugatory. There is no meaning in the concept of "irreconcilable conflicts". Conflicts that may entirely destroy the political system have no place in the functional analysis and in its so-called input-output model.

It sounds interesting when David Easton admits, "Nothing could appear to be more removed from the rich variety of political life than a box with arrows indicating inputs of demands and support, their conversion into outputs of authoritative decisions, and feedback processes representing the importance of output consequences for the next round of inputs".<sup>9</sup> But such frank admission appears highly pretentious, in a moment, as Easton continues in the same breath ;

"Yet, despite its clearly abstract and general quality and despite its construction with the needs of scientific adequacy in mind, this type of systems analysis shows *direct relevance* for understanding major substantive issues of our times." (Italics mine).<sup>10</sup> How to get the relevance of the Eastonian model in an understanding of political change in general and of revolutionary change in particular? We do not know the trick.

The claim of the developmental approach, or what is called "the functional approach to comparative politics", is based on no firmer footing. Almond and his collaborators no doubt claim that their conception of 'political system' is quite different from other functionalists, that they speak less of 'harmony' and more of 'interdependence' in the political system. They have to their credit an innovation called the 'capabilities approach' which, they believe, would allow them to study political change in a better way. But the emphasis on system maintenance is very much there. Such emphasis would obscure the fact of changeability. So, Almond and his associates, despite all novelties in their approach, bring no better picture in the analysis of political change.<sup>11</sup>

Almond and others talk of "well-developed" and "less developed", societies. The problem of change in less developed, or what they call, "transitional" societies is studied in terms of capabilities of the political system concerned. A system is called well-developed when it is found capable of dealing with large numbers of conflicting demands. Such demands are met through, what they find, the highly diverse set of structures ranging from pressure groups to legal institutions.

A capability analysis includes the performance level, the patterns of interaction with the social and international environments. And this enables one to deal "more directly and effectively with the problem of political change" as one notes that the stimulus for political change can come from three sources: "from the political system itself (i.e. from its elites), from social groups in the domestic environment, and from political systems in the international environment".<sup>12</sup>

It is interesting to note that as sources of political change the 'elites' are distinguished from other social groups in the domestic environment. And in subsequent analysis Almond and others have shown that the political elites may change the capabilities of the political system thereby producing changes in the society and in the international environment which in turn may change the pattern of demand and support.<sup>13</sup> All such illustration of elite impact on political process one may try to appreciate. But we cannot go much ahead as we find no attempt on the part of the "developmental approach" to explain the social composition of the elites—that powerful 'agent' of political change. We do not also find any analysis of the nature and direction of conflict between those "elites" and other "Social groups" in the political system. Instead we find these writers using their capabilities approach to advise the statesmen on public policy goals. They get deeply involved in those formal analysis of what they term as 'extractive', 'regulatory' and 'distributive' measures indicating the capability or performance level of the system concerned. After all, like all other functionalists, the Almond variety too is more interested in considering "the way in which political systems *maintain* or *adapt* themselves to pressures for change over the long run" (*Italics mine*).<sup>14</sup>

Thus 'System maintenance and adaptation functions'—this one objective, of understanding the points of equilibrium (levels of stability attainment), characterise all formulations of the functional approach, contrary pretensions of the authors notwithstanding.

### The Political Sociologist

In much of contemporary political sociology the study of political change seems neglected. The neglect is inherent in the very conception of politics and political change that political sociologists subscribe to. These writers recognise diversity and conflict as the motive force in the political process. Social and political conflicts, owing to cleavage, are also taken

to be the regular features of the social and political process. But in the political process the phenomenal importance of cohesion, of the process of arriving at a consensus is considered as the ultimate one. Politics is conceived as an activity that brings consensus out of conflict. And there is the idea of a so-called 'democratic consensus' irrespective of any consideration of class, status or ideological differences. As S. M. Lipset says, ".....without consensus—a political system allowing the peaceful 'play' of power, the adherence by the 'outs'—to decisions made by the 'ins' and the recognition by the 'ins' of the rights—of the 'outs' there can be no democracy".<sup>15</sup> Where on earth does Lipset find a *peaceful* play of power? Where is the political system allowing such *friendly* relation between the 'ins' and the 'outs'? We do not know. And if Lipset is developing his concept of consensus on an ideal plane well we have no business to talk about it in a scientific analysis of politics and political change.

In a way, however, the above idea of consensus dominating and controlling all conflicts is easily linked with a conception of political change called *gradualism*. Political change is conceived as a gradual process—a regular but slow movement of the polity through reforms, a change that occurs peacefully and with consensus. There is no idea of change through revolution. One is asked freely to discount all possibilities of violent struggles and divisions. This is the reformist conception of politics that is so dominant in current political sociology. This is a conception which, as one writer has rightly put, ".....is based on a view of politics as the effort to gain limited ends through negotiation among various interests within the rules of an established system".<sup>16</sup>

The growth of political sociology is itself, however, a product of revolutionary changes in the society and the economy. As Lipset himself would tell us: "the crises of the Reformation and the industrial revolution which created modern society also brought political sociology into being".<sup>17</sup> But, strangely enough, the problem which such changes would

pose for political sociology is not one of analysing the Socio-economic processes that bring revolutionary changes in the polity. On the contrary, for the political sociology of Lipset-variety these 'great changes' would only pose the problem of understanding the process of consensus-attainment. As Lipset formulates his own problem : "How can a society incorporate continuous conflict among its members and social groups and yet maintain social cohesion and the legitimacy of state authority ?"<sup>18</sup> The problem, we would like to say, could have been formulated in a different way so as to appreciate political change as it generally occurs. For example, we may ask : How does a society develop continuous conflicts ? Why, in particular, conflicts turn most vehement (turn irreconcilable) when they concern persons having antagonistic economic interests ? What are the possible directions of different forms of conflict and contradictions between the political authority and the variety of groups and 'interest aggregations' in the system ? Such formulations are not, however, meant for political sociologists like Lipset. They are, in particular, not interested in the study of political change that actually implies a distrust and derision for the state authority in the capitalist societies.

Along with Pareto, Weber, Michels and, of course, de Tocqueville, the name of Karl Marx, is no doubt associated in the "Precursors" list of Political Sociology. But the name of Marx or for the matter of that his method of Historical materialism can have no relevance to a political sociology which is conceived as a study of the balance between conflict and consensus in the political process. In fact, this type of political sociology would establish its lineage with de Tocqueville rather than with Marx. The Marxian approach is found negative, *unduly* emphasizing conflicts only. Tocqueville, on the other hand, is found capable of interpreting the central trends in modern society. As Lipset writes with high appreciation for the latter : "Tocqueville, unlike Marx, deliberately choose to emphasize the 'positive' political aspects of social



units which could maintain political cleavage and political consensus at the same time".<sup>19</sup>

In short, 'the cleavage-consensus' model does not appear basically different from the functionalist (System maintenance) model on the question of political change.

### Modernization and Change

In more recent times another politico-sociological approach, known as the Modernization approach, has developed in the study of social and political change. Political change is conceived as a process of Modernization, of political modernization to be more precise.

A general process of Modernization is conceived along with the process of industrialisation and urbanization and the totality of change is considered as a process of development. It is to be noted, at the outset, that the studies in Modernization and development (Political Modernization and Political Development) are in the main, studies in Political change in the Afro-Asian and Latin American countries. Our "Modernization" experts do not develop any model of political change that could be applied in the study of all political systems, Western or Eastern. Well, the *developed* Political systems in Europe and America are not taken into consideration. And our 'Modernization' analysts are mostly members of those developed political systems. Perhaps their political systems are so "developed" that they do not pose the problem of change any more. This feeling of being in a "superior" system is clearly revealed as we note that in the study of modernization these Euro-American political systems are referred to us as almost "ideal" types.

The Western political systems have achieved what they call Modernity. Modernity refers to the stage of a sophisticated, rational, stable and hence highly developed political system that most of the Western states have arrived at. And modernization refers to the transitional position, (hence a process of sophistication through instability) through which all traditional

systems get changed and develop into a 'modern' political system.

The Western systems have had their Renaissance, Reformation, Revolution and all that. So a long process of Modernization—a long process of political change—they have already gone through. They are now well developed political systems. So, they can stand as 'examples' to the 'poor' people of the 'poorer' nations which are going through a process of political change *right now*. Political change and Political Modernization is thus conceived as the increasing Sophistication of the entire State apparatus and the more formal involvement of the people in ensuring a smooth operation of that apparatus. The attitude that such conception implies is not difficult to guess. The 'Modernization' analysts would no more find any need to study the possibilities of some 'Renaissance' and "Revolutionary movements" in these backward nations even though they themselves had that tradition. The peoples, movements and political conflicts in these new countries are to be interpreted in terms of such innocuous concepts like Social mobilization, political participation and political socialization. Those *useless and harmful* concepts like 'Property relations', 'class-conflict' or 'extra-parliamentary' movements are carefully avoided. Political change *cannot* imply any process of ideological struggle or struggle against exploitation and (hence) a struggle to overthrow a political system. There can be disorder; but the disorder and chaos get resolved as the process of modernization gets momentum. All problems of ideology, all questions of exploitation and all forms of disorder are seen as parts of so many waves that would develop in the long, arduous process of modernization. And as waves die out when we go deep into the ocean, so all such problems and questions would get resolved as the polity develops (inevitably, of course) into a 'modern' one. Conflicts do develop always. But the process of modernization would allow a continuous reconciliation of the same. And in the state (stage) of modernity the unique

spirit of reconciliation will reign supreme. So an analysis of political change through an analysis of the process of modernization brings forth that old "Consensus-cleavage" model (or, what is the same thing, the idea of system-maintenance at newer, 'higher' levels).

Thus, while explaining one important feature of modernization, e.g. political participation, one of these writers Prof. Daniel Lerner writes, "Modern society is participant in that it functions by *Consensus*—individuals making personal decisions on public issues must concur often enough with other individuals they do not know to make possible a stable common Governance" (*Italics mine*).<sup>20</sup>

Some of these writers, S. P. Huntington for example, would consider revolutions as characteristic of modernization. Revolution is analysed as one way of modernizing a traditional society. And while explaining the nature of revolutionary change he would rely on what he formulates—the gap hypothesis. The gap hypothesis of Huntington implies that the development of political institutions would in some cases lag behind social and economic change. Accordingly Huntington would tell us :

"Revolution will not occur in highly traditional societies with very low levels of social and economic complexity. Nor will it occur in highly modern societies, it is most likely to occur in societies which have experienced some social and economic development and where the process of political modernization and political development have lagged behind the processes of social and economic change."<sup>21</sup> We need not contest Huntington's gap hypothesis. (For Huntington is not himself capable of giving a suitable illustration of a country where such gap exists). Nor need we question the possible zones of revolutionary movement that he predicts. What however we note with interest—is that same bias, that common feeling of *superiority*, that conception of 'modern' west as ideal type political system (s) immune from all the virus of revolutionary change. Well, after all, revolutions

can never occur in the west !

Another writer, David Apter, conceiving modernity as 'choice', considers the problem of political change and modernization as primarily a moral problem. As Apter writes, "to be modern means to see life as alternatives, preferences, and choices. The outermost significance of choice is not methodological in any narrow sense but moral."<sup>22</sup> A moral basis of politics and political change can be well appreciated provided one explains what constitutes the morality. In what sense the search for an alternative is moral ? Has morality any class essence ? If not (for the sake of Apter), then, how does a particular choice or preference for an ideology or governmental system become moral ? Apter does not formulate such questions. Nor does he explain the concept of 'morality' in politics. He would rather speak of a general framework of moral 'intentionality' which, he believes, directs political change and the process of modernization. And in the case of the west (i.e. the developed Western polities) he would easily discover the "Libertarian principle",<sup>23</sup> as that directing moral force. And Apter must know that it was the West which established colonies.

May be Apter finds no inconsistency in recognising a Western political system as colonialist and libertarian at the same time. After all, it is not easy for man like Apter to swallow the bitter reality that great social and political changes in the West have come out of colonial exploits.

### **The Dialectics of Change : Studying Revolution**

As theory, historical materialism provides the most comprehensive general framework for studying and explaining political change. The non-Marxist writers have always considered the materialist interpretation as a determinist one. Historical materialism refers to material conditions of life constituting the basis of social and political change. And this "material condition" is easily misinterpreted by the critics as mere economic conditions determining all the mass pheno-

mena of history. This fallacy of "economic determinism" is pointed out by the critics to belittle Marxist materialism, to show that historical materialism considers the animal instinct (i.e. the urge to eat), rather than the rational instinct, as the supreme force in our great human civilization.

It is not our purpose here to refute the charges against historical materialism (Such refutations have been made by Marxist writers many times at many places). For our purpose, it is sufficient to note that a genius of Marx's stature could hardly tell us that man lives by 'bread alone'.

Historical materialism no doubt emphasizes the 'economic factor'. The economic activities of man are undoubtedly the most important and basic among all human activities. As one eminent Indian historian so aptly puts it, "Man does not live by bread alone, but we have not yet developed a human breed that can live without bread, or at least some form of food.....the basis of any formal culture must lie in the availability of a food supply beyond that needed to support the actual food-producer".<sup>24</sup> While the central character of the economic situation is emphasized, the continuous and *reciprocal interaction* of the economic factor with all other factors is to be noted as well. The forms and conditions of production, that the term 'material conditions' refers to, would always imply such interaction. The fundamental concepts of "productive forces" and "relations of production", both constituting the mode of production, are what historical materialism formulates to render a very broad meaning to what has been said : the material conditions of life effecting social and political changes. Accordingly, the dynamism of human society is explained with reference to the following hypothesis.<sup>25</sup>

"That people must always adapt their relations of production to their forces of production, and work out ideas and \*organise themselves in institutions to enable them to do so." ('Productive Forces' refer to human labour power and all the means of production. 'Production relations' refer to all possible human relations that develop in the process of production



activity).

When such a clear and comprehensive formulation of the general hypothesis (law) of social development is made, the charge of determinism" appears flimsy and ludicrous.

The importance of historical materialism, however, does not lie in the formulation of the general law alone. The unique significance of historical materialism lies in its ability to reveal the operation of *Dialectics* in the social and political process. We may now turn to an understanding of dialectics in the process of political change. We have noted earlier that the element of conflict in the political process is considered significant and universal by all. However, we have also seen that a scientific analysis of the nature, sources, forms and directions of political conflict, could not develop owing to the over-eagerness of the *experts* to discover the so-called all embracing consensus. Having no idea of the forms of "contradiction" in the society and the polity, no knowledge of any 'law of contradiction', these writers would believe that a permanence of conflict means a permanence of anarchy. Hence their eager desire to discover the "process of consensus" anyway. The operation of dialectics that historical materialism explains allows the only scientific understanding of the process of conflict. We are required to note: Everything contains contradiction; without contradiction there can be no change, no political development.

In political analysis the dialectical process refers to the process of political activity ensuring a law of contradiction. The struggle and unity of opposites—this is the law of contradiction, this is the essence of dialectics, that we need to explain in the study of the political process and political change.

The law implies a study of the development of a thing from the inside. The basic cause of development of a thing lies in its internal contradictions. Thus, the development/change of social and political forms and institutions is due chiefly to the internal cause (i.e. the struggle and unity of opposites within those forms and institutions). "External causes take

effect through internal ones". And, of course, "A thing in its movement and the things around it should be regarded as interconnected and interacting upon each other" Thus, in studying a political phenomenon we are to note its interaction and interconnection with other phenomena round it. The surrounding, external elements/forces constitute the *condition* of change, but the *basis* of change of the phenomenon in question lies in its internal contradictions.

Along with the universality of contradiction (the struggle and unity of opposite forces, i. e. opposite ideas, activities and situations, in all processes of change and development) we also note the particularity of contradiction, viz., the struggle and unity of opposites in each particular form of political activity or thinking. Furthermore, we are required to analyse the principal and non-principal aspects of contradiction as also the principal contradiction as such in a situation of innumerable contradictions. Thus in a capitalist political system, the principal contradiction is that between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Again, for any particular contradiction we have its principal and non-principal *aspects*. Thus, generally speaking, in the contradiction between the productive forces and the production relations the former constitutes the principal aspect. We must note, however, that the position is by no means given; that is, a principal contradiction may not for a long time remain principal: a principal *aspect* of a contradiction may also turn non-principal. Thus the contradictions along with their different aspects "transform themselves into each other and the nature of a thing changes accordingly."

Finally, contradiction is not just identical with antagonism. For, there can be non-antagonistic contradictions (as between members of the same ruling class) which are no less significant in the process of change.

The above analysis of the nature of contradiction made mainly on the lines formulated by Mao-Tse-Tung,<sup>26</sup> can be of immense help in an understanding of political and social

changes. And the fact is perhaps best demonstrated in the analysis of *revolution* made by Marx and Marxists themselves. As Bottomore has rightly noted, "the sociology of revolution has so far only one major contribution to record, that of Marx himself."<sup>27</sup>

The phenomenon of revolution is too big a fact to avoid anybody's attention. Hitherto the non-Marxist writers also have come up with varying interpretations of the revolutionary process. But as these writers do not care to analyse the process of contradiction in the way outlined above, their voluminous writings on revolution have so far failed to produce any outstanding contribution on the subject. On the other hand, as they cannot read the various aspects of the process of contradictions that develop during revolution, they would make little distinction between revolution and such other widely different political phenomena like coup d' etat, change of government, cabinet reshuffles etc. And as they do not go deep into the analysis of internal contradictions they would only tackle the surface, explaining all those superficial features and pointing out all those psychological, psycho-political and pseudo-sociological reasons that allegedly account for a revolution. Certain trivial contentions, rather than the investigation of the internal and external causes, make up the substance of these theories. And finally, as these writers do not subscribe to the "point of view" which historical materialism works out, they do not make any clear distinction between revolution and counter-revolution.

In the study of revolution some authors would often crudely reveal their bias against such a thorough-going social and political process. Such bias, which the Marxists call the class standpoint, can be easily noted in writers like Hannah Arendt. Thus, concerning the social question and the 'pursuit of happiness' involved in the process of revolution, Miss Arendt writes, "Human life has been stricken with poverty since times immemorial and mankind continues to labour under this *curse* in all countries outside the Western

Hemisphere. No revolution has *ever* solved the social question and liberated men from the predicament of want..."<sup>28</sup> and to quote her again, "...freedom has been *better* preserved in countries where no revolution ever broke out, no matter how outrageous the circumstances of the powers that be, and that there exist more civil liberties even in countries where the revolution was defeated than in those where revolutions have been victorious." (*Italics mine*).<sup>29</sup>

An exercise in trivialities in the name of investigation is best illustrated in the study by T. D. Gurr. Prof. Gurr, claiming to develop an integrated theory of political violence, has made use of a concept called 'Relative Deprivation'. Relative deprivation is defined as a perceived discrepancy between man's value expectations and their value capabilities. And, according to Gurr, "Discontent arising from the perception of relative deprivation is the basic, instigating condition for participants in collective violence."<sup>30</sup> The contention becomes trivial as the concept 'Relative Deprivation' is defined in a language where all the words (like 'value', 'expectation', 'capabilities') may have thousand meanings.

Some again, like Peter Calvert would define revolution as a "political term covering all forms of violent change of government or regime originating internally."<sup>31</sup> While this definition rightly emphasizes the "internal origin" it makes no distinction between revolution and counter-revolution. Mr. Calvert, moreover, does not possess any sense about the social context of a revolutionary process. Thus he would freely advise his fellow political scientists to 'eschew the term social revolution' altogether."<sup>32</sup>

An example of academic sophistry one can find in the study of revolution by Chalmers Johnson. Taking the cue from structural functional analysis the author indulges in pointless abstractions using the concept of "dysfunction" as the major tool in his analysis of the revolutionary process. Revolution is found to occur "at a particular stage in the system's efforts to resolve functional difficulties."<sup>33</sup> Dysfunc-

tion, as the condition that causes disequilibrium, is considered to have many sources like cyclical pressures, global diffusion of industrial culture etc. And here is Johnson's unique formula :

Multiple dysfunction + elite intransigence + X = Revolution.<sup>34</sup> Where 'X' refers to accelerators of dysfunction.

So we are required first to calculate the number of dysfunctions (if, however, we can at all know what dysfunctions are). Then, secondly, we must try to understand what constitutes an 'intransigence' and that on the part of elites. And finally, of course, we must take into account all possible elements that may accelerate this or that dysfunction. In the process we can happily indulge in all subjective assessments.

We need not multiply the examples. We can observe that nothing short of a dialectical approach can allow us to understand the depth and breadth of the revolutionary process.

The history of mankind is a remarkably dynamic one. Revolution as one great mark of dynamism is thus to be conceived as an historical process "leading to and culminating in social transformation, wherein one ruling class is displaced by another, with the new class representing, as compared to the old enhanced productive capacities and socially progressive potentialities".<sup>35</sup> This one definition shows that following the principles of historical and dialectical materialism one can unfold the basic character of the revolutionary process. Following the law of contradiction this definition points out the fundamental nature and the possible direction of social conflicts.

The study of contradiction between the social character of production and the private character of ownership should thus form our starting point in the analysis of the revolutionary political process in modern societies. We need an understanding of the nature and the various expressions of class struggle. The nature of exploitation of the masses of producers in a particular way and the particular 'production relations' necessary to maintain the exploitation must be carefully analyzed.



This will allow us to get the character of the political system because the "political system is the means by which.....a particular form of ownership and appropriation of products of labour is imposed upon the whole of society".<sup>36</sup>

Political change—revolutionary change in particular—is perhaps the most difficult problem confronting the political analyst. Changes in the polity is no doubt related to a vast range of social and economic forces. There cannot be any *pure* political approach in the study of political change. Even the "politico-sociological" approaches are of no help when they do not follow the law of contradiction operating in the social and political process. Historical materialism, through the application of the principles of dialectics, has developed the most effective and powerful system of analysis that can bring the vast range of social and political phenomena within a coherent whole enabling a scientific study of the process of change. But then, the academic world too remains divided, the acceptance or non-acceptance of the scientific character of historical materialism remaining very much a question of *attitude*. As one author rightly observes, ".....an ideological referent, or some kind of 'point of view', is a logical necessity in the analysis of political change because a conventional definition of this concept is futile".<sup>37</sup>

After all, the law of contradiction does not exclude our thinking *styles* from its field of operation.

## Notes and References

1. Aristotle, however, was an exception. It goes to the credit of this great pioneer of political analysis to have made the first scientific attempt to study the process of political change. It is significant that he could take up the study of revolutions (even though it was not possible for him at that time to work out fully the dynamics of revolution) which many 'modern' writers have failed to analyse.
2. David Easton, 'The Political System' (Indian Edition), 1971, p. 42.
3. For a brief comment on Easton's model. see Chapter II, *Supra*.
4. We do not identify equilibrium analysis with systems analysis. But

then on the question of revolutionary transformations we find both the forms of analysis verging on the same point—that of discarding the idea of the replacement of the system itself. And, moreover, while showing the limitations of general equilibrium as theory, Easton reveals his great appreciation for the notion of a moving equilibrium that in fact constitutes one important foundation of his systems analysis, see D. Easton—*op cit.* chs. XI & XII.

5. K. Marx, 'Theses on Feuerbach' (Written in 1845).
6. It appears that the functional or systems analysis in politics has nothing new to offer than what the long known structural functional school in sociology purports—See Ch. II—Appendix.
7. See James C. Charlesworth, 'Contemporary Political Analysis' p. 7 (The Free Press N. Y. 1967).
8. For an illuminating critique of the functional analysis, see R. E. Jones, 'The Functional Analysis of Politics' (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1967).
9. David Easton *Op. Cit* p. 372.
10. D. Easton, *Loc. Cit.*
11. See G. A Almond and G. B. Powell, jr 'Comparative politics A Developmental Approach' (an Analytical Study) see p. 14 to get the elements of Almond model. (Amerind Publishing, New Delhi, Indian Edition, 1972).
12. *Ibid.* p. 193
13. *Ibid.* p. 194.
14. *Ibid.* p. 14.
15. S. M. Lipset 'Political Man' (The Social Bases of Politics) p. 21 (Heinemann, London, 1960).
16. See A. Pizzorno (Ed) 'Political Sociology.' See Introduction p. 18. (Penguin 1971).
17. S. M. Lipset's article on Political Sociology in R. K. Merton L. Broom & L. S. Cottrell Jr. (Ed) 'Sociology to-day' p. 81. (Basic Books, N. Y. 1959)
18. *Ibid.* p. 81.
19. *Ibid.* p. 87.

20. Daniel Lerner, 'The Passing of Traditional Society' (Modernizing the Middle East) p. 50. (The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1958).
21. Samuel P. Huntington, 'Political Order in Changing Societies' p. 265 (New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 1968).
22. David E. Apter. 'The Politics of Modernization.' Third impression, 1957 pp 10-11 (The University of Chicago Press 1965).
23. *Ibid* p. 12f.
24. See D. D. Kosambi, 'The culture and civilisation of ancient India' (in historical outline), p. 11 (Vikas Publishing. Delhi 1970).
25. See M. Cornforth, 'The open philosophy and the open Society' see p. 25 ff, (International Publishers, N. Y. 1968).
26. See Mao Tse-Tung-'On contradiction' (Foreign language Press Peking 1960) (So far the best single piece of writing explaining the essence of dialectics).
27. T. B. Bottomore & M. Rubel (Ed) 'Karl Marx. Selected Writings in Sociology & Social Philosophy' p. 40 (Penguin Books 1961).
28. Hannah Arendt, 'On Revolution' p. 112 (Penguin, 1973).
29. *Ibid.* p. 115.
30. T. D. Gurr, 'Why men Rebel' p. 13, (Princeton, N. J. 1970),
31. Peter Calvert, 'Revolution' p. 141, (Macmillan, 1970).
32. *Ibid.* p. 142.
33. Chalmers Johnson, 'Revolution and the Social System' p. 4. (Hoover Institution Studies, Stanford University, 1964).
34. *Ibid*, p. 12.
35. See Herbert Aptheker, 'The Nature of democracy, freedom and revolution' p. 76, (International Publishers N. Y. 1967)
36. M. Cornforth *op. cit.* p. 217.
37. A. Pizzorno, *op. cit.* p. 17.

## Historical Materialism and Sociology of Politics

In modern political analysis the contribution of Sociology is on the increase. And this is only so proper. For, Sociology can alone provide us with the basic knowledge concerning the primary and secondary forces operating behind and through the political process. A study of politics becomes rewarding when one recognizes this 'sociological' behind, or along with, the political.

While many following the behavioural revolution in politics would recognize this significance of sociological knowledge in the study of politics, there are some writers who, as we have noted earlier,<sup>1</sup> would consider this alleged 'academic imperialism' of sociology as a danger. However, an increasingly larger part of modern political analysis developing through the sociological approach have easily ignored this 'danger'; on the other hand, the growth of a new study called 'political sociology' has greatly strengthened the importance of the 'sociological' in political analysis. Prof. T. B. Bottomore has rightly argued that as distinct from political theory (which is largely political philosophy) there is nothing in modern political science to make its practitioners averse to sociological studies in some form or other. To quote Bottomore: "...political science has borrowed concepts and generalizations from sociology, and appears much more evidently a branch of sociology. That is to say, political science (or political sociology) is concerned with a particular institution, the state, in exactly the same way as the sociology of the family, or the sociology of religion are concerned with other social institutions. The absence of any distinctive political science theory means that there are no intellectual obstacles to the recognition of political science and political

sociology as identical subjects."<sup>2</sup> In fact, there is no such thing as a *pure* political science theory in modern times. On the contrary, the theoretical formulations of such important writers like Easton or Almond show how greatly their systems analysis or functionalism are dependent on the sociological contributions from Montesquieu to Talcott Parsons.

Hitherto, in this concluding chapter, we may explain the nature of political sociology (which is modern political science/analysis) as conceived in the west as well as the relation between sociology and politics as conceived by the Marxists.

### **The Development of Sociology**

Europe gave birth to a discipline, a systematic and scientific study of society, in the first half of the 19th Century. And that discipline, sociology, was encyclopaedic in its nature at birth. The works of Auguste Comte, Karl Marx and Herbert Spencer and to some extent of Durkheim and Max Weber bear testimony to the grand character of the discipline. The grandness was natural, unavoidable. The European unrest caused by the social and industrial revolutions demanded from the scholars (and the 'rulers') an analysis of society in its totality. These highly influential changes generated a demand for a science of the social life on which economic and political changes alike impinged. The discipline of political economy (which came a bit earlier) was not meant, by its nature and scope, to fulfil this grand demand. Moreover, political economy was gradually getting bifurcated into two distinct specialisms, viz. pure economics (as a study of the problem of production and exchange of goods and commodities) and political science (as a policy science with a theoretical analysis of the state apparatus). Sociology thus emerged to fill the vacuum with a promise to analyse the nexus of human social relationships as a whole and to study the processes of evolution and change of societies in particular. In this process of analysis sociology would (a) in the first place, do what political economy was not doing; that is, making enquiries about the family,



religion, culture, norm-sets etc. and (b) in the second place, *undo* what social philosophy was doing; that is, unmaking the sweeping generalisations of social philosophy.<sup>3</sup>

With the turn of the century, as sociology was rapidly taken up by men on the other side of the Atlantic, a sharp change appeared in the nature of the discipline. These men, the Americans, took sociology more as social survey, especially after the first great war, busying themselves with the empirical/field studies on those subjects to which the discipline gives most attention. The post-2nd war world is strewn with a plethora of such field works the total impact of which only indicate a decline in what C. Wright Mills suggests 'the sociological imagination.'<sup>4</sup> Many of these American sociologists, again, have engaged themselves in writing sociological text books and a select few can, of course, be discovered in their *grand* efforts to develop theories and methods well under the shadow of a pseudo-grand theorist in the name of Talcott Parsons.<sup>5</sup> The end product of all these field works, text books and theorisings is the mushroom growth of so many sociologies.<sup>6</sup> It will be wrong if one says that these specialists and their special sociologies have been doing little in the enrichment of sociological thinking and research. The point, however, is that the mad race for counting and assimilating data (with all the blessings of cybernetics) has the great risk of throwing away the baby with the bath-water. In the absence of a scientific macro-view of society such data-based research would be pointless, ludicrous<sup>7</sup> and often misleading to the young students. A student suddenly confronted with so many specialisms each burdened with huge statistical (*often not well-knit*) materials and facts would hardly discern the wood for the trees.

### The Nature of Political Sociology

Political sociology is, in one sense, the latest of the special sociologies as it is yet to acquire a full-scale formal status. It is interesting to note that not a few in this special

field would use the two expressions 'Sociology of Politics' and 'Political Sociology' in the same breath, in the same context. May be, they intend no distinction between the two expressions. The present writer, however, notes two clear tendencies that necessitate a distinction here: First, there are some politologists (however small their number may be) who vigorously insist on the distinction pleading for Political Sociology as a distinct discipline while pushing out 'sociology of politics' as an altogether different matter. Secondly, even those who apparently do not make the distinction would work on anything but a sociology of politics<sup>8</sup>—Sociology of politics in the sense to be placed later in this Chapter.

What then is political Sociology? Clearly, it involves both the society and the polity. It may thus be a study of the interconnections and interrelations between the Society and the Polity. But such a study of the intercourse alone cannot make political sociology a distinct specialism. Its distinct character, if any, must be in carving out a distinct field with a distinct approach. Politologists have so far not done that. Yet they would define their 'specialism' in some fashion. Thus it is often defined as one "encompassing the overlap between Sociology and Political Science". If that be so, then the scope of the new discipline remains delightfully vague, the *overlap* being never clearly known. Sometimes, again, it is conceived as "the study of political processes as special cases of sociological relationships."<sup>9</sup> In that case, again, the study becomes one of sociological politics which the politologists abhor so much. Incidentally, the classics, (and the classical authorities) which the present politologists invoke to justify their position, are all, in the main, works on sociological politics.<sup>10</sup> The intentions of the classical authorities working on sociological politics do, however, reveal the basis on which the present politologists take their stand. Thus S. M. Lipset, one of the leading American politologists, informs us that Max Weber suggested to Roberto Michels that he

(Michels) 'study the structure of the German Social Democratic Party in order to understand the impact of the political parties created to mobilise the masses in electoral democracies on the economic and social structure' (Italics mine).<sup>11</sup> Again, concerning Mosca one able commentator tells us that the thesis of the "Ruling Class" presents the concept called Political Formula somewhat like Weber's 'legitimation' of power that acts as a great social force.<sup>12</sup> Both Weber and Michels, again, talk highly of leaders and their impact on society, the former in particular keeping his faith in the 'charismatic leadership' to save the world from mediocrity.<sup>13</sup> The three great authorities thus lay bare the intentions behind their 'sociological' politics. They have been, in short, at their best to establish the pre-eminence of non-economic factors affecting social institutions. The uniquely *independent* role of political institutions/forces causing change in non-political social structures is thereby advocated. And there lies the germ of what they call political sociology in the west, especially in America.

Now we can take up Lipset at the right place: "Political Sociology can be defined as the study of the interrelationship between society and polity, between social structures and political institutions. It is important to note that this definition *does not* assign causal priority to society over polity; political sociology is not solely the study of the social factors that condition the political order. Indeed, political institutions are themselves social structures, and hence are often the *independent* (that is, causal) factors that affect non-political social structures" (Italics mine).<sup>14</sup> A little elaboration of the more common themes taken up by Political Sociologists may be made at this point.

The polity is viewed as a system responsible for allocating the resources and facilities of society. To perform that task, again, the polity requires legitimacy—"a built-in title to rule."<sup>15</sup> And the stability of the polity would, again, require another factor, namely, effectiveness or actual performance.

Political sociology devotes much research on the nature and ways of legitimacy and effectiveness. Some other themes commonly taken up by political sociologists are : parties and voting, class and politics, bureaucracy and government etc. In none of these studies, it should be remembered, *the total image of society* is ever presented. These are all fragmented, micro-level studies within the formal political structures. Even the studies on legitimacy and bureaucracy are made on a formal level. The tremendous and varied impact of the continuous antagonism of the contending social groups (classes) on the politico—legal structures is not seriously taken into account. Thus while analysing “legitimacy and effectiveness” of the polity Lipset starts with the Weberian classification of traditional, rational-legal and charismatic patterns.<sup>16</sup> Then he goes on telling us how a traditional legitimacy can be maintained, where does a charismatic pattern win, when would the polity withstand a considerable decline in effectiveness and so on. And all these prescriptions and inquiries are made on an abstract level. And when he takes up concrete illustrations he appears pointless. Thus : “Washington refused to take full advantage of his charisma—he pushed the American polity faster toward a legal-rational system of authority.”<sup>17</sup> Now what does this illustration mean ? How does it enlighten one about the basic nature of the early American political system ? Can it in any way give us any idea about the reaction of the different categories of people at that time in America ? No satisfactory answer can be given to any of these questions by the political sociologists like Lipset. Again, when Lipset tries to analyse the relationship between economic effectiveness and political systems he appears with highly misleading ( and perhaps motivated ) statements. Some of these statements are : “The more well-to-do a nation is, the greater are the chances that it will sustain democracy”,<sup>18</sup> “the wealthier a country, the less is status inferiority experienced as a major source of deprivation.”<sup>19</sup> “If there is enough wealth in the country……it does not matter greatly

which side is in power.”<sup>20</sup> I think, we need no further samples, nor is it necessary to comment on such irresponsible statements. These, again, indicate what sort of analysis is there on ‘class and politics’ or ‘parties and voting.’ A study on class and class-antagonism in political sociology is simply impossible—political sociology being what we have just known it to be. As to the endless publications in political sociology on opinion and voting behaviour we may, however, refer to some apt comments. These will highlight the sad state of what is known to be the largest single field of inquiry in political sociology. The comments are on the indiscriminate use and the irresponsible handling of the so-called quantitative methods and the sample survey tools: “It has been alleged that an American poll once found that a majority of Americans had views on a non-existent Metallic Metals act.”<sup>21</sup> The problem is often that of a search for quantification as an end in itself, because there is something to be measured. “Meticulous care is often taken to discover the class readership of newspapers and the political views of the editors before the more important question of whether newspapers actually influence political opinion is discussed.”<sup>22</sup>

We have thus an idea (if at all we can form an ‘idea’) of what political sociology is about. We are at least in a position to say that political sociology is primarily a development to counteract the thesis that political institutions are secondary or consequential to the basic socio-economic structure. Much of American sociology to-day is characterised by such studies on sociological politics/political sociology. Much of American political analysis also follow the same course. Hitherto it often becomes difficult to say how many scholars in U.S.A. are political scientists and how many are sociologists in pure sense. The confusion is worst confounded when we find someone putting forward the claim for a *pure* political sociology. Thus Giovanni Sartori pleads for a new (and pure) political sociology where politics, far



from being studied as a mere projection, will be studied on the basis of its own independent set of variables. Sartori accuses all modern practitioners in political sociology for their inability to define this 'independent' set of variables and discover the special 'political' laws. These practitioners, according to Sartori, have actually been doing sociological reduction of politics in the name of political sociology. Hence for a breakthrough, for a 'real', 'pure' political sociology one should study "the *political* reasons why people act the way they do" (Sartori's *Italics*).<sup>23</sup>

The need for a real political sociology, Sartori admits, has been obscured by the apparent headway of the sociology of politics. We may tell Sartori that this headway is *real*, not apparent.<sup>24</sup> The development of the sociology of politics will thus always frustrate the attempts toward a so-called pure political sociology.

### Historical Materialism, Sociology and Political Analysis

A Sociology of politics is conceived here as the direct outcome of Marx's conception of historiography. This conception of historiography is a genuinely new contribution that Marx makes in the history of human thinking. The grand Marxian social dynamics has grown out of this conception. Commonly known as historical materialism, this Marxist historiography provides an elaborate set of categories for analysing social systems, "taking into account that all social systems are continually undergoing change."<sup>25</sup> As such the type of sociology derived from this historiography has its own distinctive approach with a distinctive set of themes. Its main themes are: (a) the economic structure of society and the social formations, (b) the legal, political and ideological forms and superstructure, (c) social change and revolution and (d) Socialism and Communism. All these, again, constitute the principal themes of Marxian social dynamics. Taking classes and class struggles as the one ubiquitous historical fact, all these categories and themes are woven into a

single whole thereby presenting an image of society that is more complete when compared with that presented by Comte or Spencer.<sup>26</sup> The methodological basis of this grand system is the materialist interpretation of history. It is not 'economic determinism' as scholars like Schumpeter would vulgarise it. For, Marx spoke of the 'materialist basis' of his method of investigation, the term 'material' being employed "to designate the fundamental, primary conditions of human existence."<sup>27</sup> Marxian social dynamics highlights this materialist basis while studying the general characteristics of social action and the historical varieties of social systems. As a part of social action, political actions of individuals, groups and institutions have thus a materialist basis that must be taken into account. As such, far from conceiving sociology of politics as an independent discipline, it will be considered as a section in general sociology (Social Dynamics) and a section that is inextricably connected with all other studies coming under that grand whole called Society—Society viewed as a totality of the relations of production. No meaningful study of politics and political forms/institutions—no sociology of politics, so to say—can be made otherwise.

The mode of production of material life, Marx so rightly tells us, determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life.<sup>28</sup> If we do not accept this, if we fail to establish the correlations between a certain stage of economic development and the various cultural products, our sociology of politics (or for the matter of that, any other 'special' sociology) would be anything but scientific. In other words, if we take the political and ideological constructions as forms in themselves, we may have a skeleton called political sociology that can produce no serious work in the field. We cannot resist quoting Lenin here. Writes Lenin : "This idea of materialism in Sociology was in itself a stroke of genius.....this hypothesis was the first to elevate Sociology to the level of a science. Hitherto, sociologists has found it difficult to distinguish the important and the unimportant in the complex net-

work of social phenomena (that is the root of subjectivism in sociology) and had been unable to discover any objective criterion for such a demarcation. Materialism provided an absolutely objective criterion by singling out *production relations* as the structure of society, and by making it possible to apply to these relations that general scientific criterion of recurrence whose applicability to sociology the subjectivists denied. So long as they confined themselves to ideological social relations they could not observe recurrence and regularity in the social phenomena of the various countries, and their science was at best only a description of these phenomena, a collection of raw material".<sup>29</sup>

The Marxian social dynamics,<sup>30</sup> it is often alleged, is a collection of abstract schemes and general laws not based on concrete empirical investigation of social reality. And this is perhaps the most misinformed and surely the most mistaken idea that one may have on Marxian sociology. The fact is, the very first sociological field work is a product of one of the founders of the Marxian social dynamics. We mean obviously F. Engels and his brilliant study on the *Condition of the Working Classes in England* (1845). What an East European scholar writes on this work of Engels is illuminating: "(It was) the result of detailed and conscientious research into social reality by a man who had long lived among workers, who had investigated all accessible official and unofficial documents, who, as he himself said, 'gave up the official dinners, port-wine and champagne of the bourgeois and dedicated almost all his free time to the company of real workers, visited them in their flats, observed their everyday life, talked with them and followed their struggle against the social and political authority of their oppressors'. Bourgeois sociology, in spite of its profession of empiricism and concreteness, has not in a hundred years produced a work on the working class, which in documentation as well as in theoretical consequences, could be compared with that of Engels".<sup>31</sup>

Some critics argue that it is odd and rather old-fashio-

ned to pursue "a total image of society" in the present day world. To-day, it is said, "precision and measurement are the most cherished scientific values even if achieved by picking up a single pair of variables from the Lazarsfeldian 'universum of items.'"<sup>32</sup> The simple answer is that the Marxian approach to human science is distinguished by its predominance of macro-social problems and issues over partial, one-sided and narrowly framed research items and themes.

It is true, much work ( of the nature of Engels mentioned above ) has not been done by the Marxists either in the field of politics or in the field of religion, culture, literature etc. In other words, the Marxian Social dynamics is rather poor in its applied side. It is, however, interesting to note that a good number of non-Marxist scholars in the west have adopted, consciously or unconsciously the Marxian methodological system, i.e. historical materialism, in their studies. The study of the American Constitution by Charles Beard, T. B. Bottomore's study of classes and elites and some of C. Wright Mills's studies reveal this impact of Marxian social dynamics. The Marxists would be fools, if they bemoan the absence of any 'Marxist *school of Sociology*.' Sociology itself is, to a great extent, the product of the works of Marx and Engels and the development of sociology is also greatly inspired by their findings and observations.<sup>33</sup> Even in modern times when the American sociologists are trying to develop a 'Political Sociology' ( or any other special or general Sociology ) they all bring the Marxian system first, if only to counteract it, conceding in the process the great contribution of the system. And it is a fact undeniable that from Weber to Mills only those writings in sociology appear significant which show greater impact of, or conformity to, the Grand Marxian System.

Now to take up the question raised by the politologists and political sociologists : Can politics and the state be self-sufficient ? Do they contain and control the truth of the reality that is history ? Hegel would have answered them in the

affirmative as he actually did in his own way. And Marx, we know, denies this Hegelian position.

The truth of politics, and hence of the state, is to be found in society. Social relationships account for political forms. The state is no doubt the most powerful socio-political structure. But then, it is not the fundamental or basic social structure. It possesses organisation, ideology and it takes political decisions. But it cannot be entirely separated from the actual society on which it is based—the classes and their struggles. As Henri Lefebvre points out, "It ( the state ) has a distinct reality, but this reality is not autonomous, though it tends to autonomy ; its reality depends on the existing social relationships. Consequently, although the state apparatus tends to set itself above classes it (in fact) serves the ruling class or classes."<sup>34</sup> This is the essence of the sociology of politics that Lefebvre puts so clearly. If one keeps this essence in his head all his studies on voting, parties, classes etc. will have a fair chance of making sense. The close relation between the society and the polity and above all the fundamentally dependent character of the polity can be ignored only by those who are madly after the will-o-the-wisp called the *overlap*<sup>35</sup> between sociology and political science. And is not political science itself in a period of crisis ? The danger of over-abstraction and indifference to the realities of the social and political world can hardly be avoided by the modern political scientists with all their unmeaning and pointless input-output concepts and models. In fact, political sociology developed in the west to act as a saviour of political science. But if Jesus could have at least saved others, this political sociology ( that ignores the essence mentioned above ) would save none.

#### Notes and References :

1. See Chapter II, *Supra*.
2. T. B. Bottomore, 'Sociology' p. 66 (George Allen & Unwin, 1962).



3. cf. Morris Ginsberg, 'Sociology' p. 24 ff. (OUP, London, 1934). For a guide to the antecedents of sociology and its growth see T. B. Bottomore, 'Sociology' (Allen & Unwin, 1962) Ch. I.
4. Mills felt uneasy and tortured at the sight of the 'pretentious mediocrity of much current effort' in sociology. See C. Wright Mills, 'The Sociological imagination', p. 27 (Penguin Books, 1970).
5. The grand theory in the Parsonian system "is only about 50 p. c. verbiage; 40 p. c. is well-known text book sociology. . . . the remaining 10 p. c. is of possible—although rather vague—ideological use (for the establishment)". This comment is from C. Wright Mills, *op. cit.* p. 59 (in foot note).
6. To day one may count more than two dozens of 'special' sociologies on family, urbanism, law, religion, literature, medicine etc.
7. With an obvious dig at contemporary sociology an American Philosopher presents his Witty pamphlet 'Umbrellalogy—A new Science?' There a fictitious scientist had 'presumably made a study of Manhattan, had discovered the number of umbrellas (including their size, colour etc.) possessed by each family, and was going to make a similar study. . . . in New York, the country. . . . the world.' Cited in G. Osipov, 'Sociology', p. 66 (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1969).
8. In a trend report on the development of Political Sociology in the United States we find no distinction between Political Sociology & Sociology of Politics. What is more, the writer has even included such diverse writings as on political ecology, study of revolutions and other social movements, study of ideologies, foreign relations etc. under the general title of Political Sociology. At the end of the report he further informs us that Political Sociology appears under 'a variety of titles' in many universities in the college curriculum. See Feliks Gross, "Political Sociology" in "Readings in contemporary American Sociology", p. 201 ff. (Edited by Joseph R. Roucek-Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1961).
9. Such views are entertained by political sociologists like S. M. Lipset. See his 'Political man' (Doubleday, 1963) for an understanding of this approach.
10. For example, Gaetano Mosca's 'Ruling class' (1885), Roberto Michels's 'First lectures in Political Sociology' (1927) and 'Political Parties' (1911) and much of Max Weber's writings.

11. S. M. Lipset (Ed.), 'Politics and the Social Sciences' Introduction, p. xx (Wiley Eastern Reprint, 1972).
12. Irving M. Zeitlin, 'Ideology and the Development of Sociological Theory', p. 200 ff. (Prentice-Hall, New Delhi, 1969).
13. A detailed study of the Sociological Politics of Weber, Mosca and Michels is not made here ; the scope of the present chapter precludes that study ; readers are, however, referred to Irving Zeitlin's work (cited in footnote 12) for a very interesting commentary on all the three 'Classical' authorities along with Pareto, Mannheim and Durkheim.
14. S. M. Lipset's essay on 'Political Sociology' in Neil J. Smelser (Ed.) 'Sociology : An Introduction' (Wiley Eastern Reprint, 1970) p. 440. We give a greater consideration to Lipset as his writings provide the best example of political analysis *as* political sociology.
15. S. M. Lipset in N. J. Smelser (Ed.) *op. cit.* p. 441.
16. *Ibid.* p. 442.
17. *Ibid.* p. 445.
18. *Ibid.* p. 449.
19. *Ibid.* p. 452.
20. *Ibid.* p. 453.
21. D. Butler, 'The Study of Political behaviour' (London, 1958) p. 70. Quoted in Alan R. Ball, "Modern Politics and Government" p. 11 (Macmillan Press, 1971).
22. Alan Ball, *op. cit.* p. 12.
23. Giovanni Sartori, 'From the Sociology of Politics to Political Sociology' in S. M. Lipset (Ed.) *op cit.* p. 92.
24. Sartori; amusingly enough, considers the headway an 'optical illusion'. See G. Sartori, *Loc. Cit.*
25. T. B. Bottomore & M. Rubel, 'Karl Marx : Selected writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy' Introduction, p. 38 (Penguin Books, 1963).
26. MacIver rightly says, 'Comte left sociology itself too vaguely comprehensive. While Spencer was developing the Darwinian theory of evolution in the social sphere his "social philosophy rested on a

belated laissez-faire individualism, which in effect denied the implications of his own doctrine of the organic nature of society", MacIver, however, did not note Marx's contribution—the omission, I think, is deliberate owing to the typical American bias. See R. M. MacIver, 'Sociology' in the "Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences" (Edited by E. R. A. Seligman) Vol. 13.

27. See T. B. Bottomore and M. Rubel, *op. cit.* p. 36.
28. This and similar statements made by Marx while explaining his materialist conception of history will be found in the 'Preface' to his 'A Contribution to the critique of political economy', first published in 1859, Berlin.
29. V. I. Lenin, "What the Friends of the People are and how they fight the social democrats", p. 13 (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1966).
30. Marx's sociological system is called 'Social Dynamics' as it is "essentially a body of knowledge of how social change takes place, rather than a description of existing social institutions, such as might be called Social Statics". See John Strachey, 'The theory and practice of Socialism', p. 354 (Victor Gollancz Ltd. London, 1936).
31. Ljubomir Zivkovic, 'The Structure of Marxist Sociology' in Peter Berger (Edited) 'Marxism and Sociology', views from Eastern Europe, (Appleton-Century Crofts, New York, 1969) pp. 119-120. See also Engels' appeal to the working classes of Great Britain in "The Condition of the working class in England" (1845).
32. Zygmunt Bauman, 'Modern times, Modern Marxism' in Peter Berger (Ed.) *op. cit.* p. 2.
33. Thus it is said that much of western sociology has come as a result of a prolonged debate with the ghost of Karl Marx. See Irving Zeitlin, *op. cit.*
34. Henri Lefebvre, 'The Sociology of Marx', p. 124 (Allen Lane, The Penguin Press. 1971).
35. See Lipset in Smelser (Ed.) *op. cit.* for an effort to get some meaning of this overlap.

## Addendum

### On the Significance of Two Basic Marxian Concepts in Political Analysis.

Political analysis takes a very different character (from what the western academics would present before us) when we take note of two basic Marxist concepts, viz. (i) the concept of Alienation and (ii) the concept of the Withering away of the state.

A plethora of writings on individual rights and freedom can be found in the west. But very few of the western pundits could explain the 'human condition', the actual predicament of the flesh and blood individual human being. It is no use emphasizing the importance of the concepts of 'freedom' and 'fundamental rights' when one does not know (or care to know) whether the individual is actually in a position to 'understand' (not to speak of enjoying) such rights and freedoms.

In their attempt to develop more sophisticated—and more formal—political analysis, modern writers seem to have totally abjured all considerations of the 'individual' human condition that is essentially a product of definite social and political relations. The input-output frame or the structural-functional model cannot provide any room for an appreciation of the growth process of the *non-human* in the human being. And does not political analysis become unmeaning when it fails to explain the basic disorder (the loss of the 'human') of the individual human being who is the ultimate unit of all social and political analysis? And here lies the importance and relevance of the Marxist concept of Alienation. Marx's theory of Alienation is so far the only attempt to explain the nature of the process that brings the 'human predicament'. Political analysis gets highly enriched when one takes into account this process of Alienation.

The study of Alienation will, again, reveal the importance of the other concept—the concept of the withering away of the state. Political analysis may also get immensely enriched when one is capable of making a projection to the future state of political affairs. All our talk about political development, all our analysis on the condition of the democratic polity turn unrewarding if we cannot construct logically the ‘necessary’ stages of development of our societies towards a ‘complete’ democracy. An ideal like communism may not be easily achieved. Nevertheless, a conception concerning the stages of movement towards such an ideal would make us know how the alienated condition may get transcended. This is not conceiving the utopian. It is rather the highly abstract conceptions of justice and democracy, which the western political analysts adhere to, that remain utopian. And it is, perhaps, for their inherent vagueness that modern political analysis avoid any reference to the development of the political system towards such ideals of justice or democracy. Remaining, as they do, in the main, committed to a philosophy of status-quo they cannot appreciate any idea of a change of the political system towards the ‘better’ (and thereby improving the human condition), not to speak of appreciating the idea of withering away of the political system. So, to explain briefly the Marxian concepts now:

### (I) The Political Process Representing Alienation

Historical materialism views the political process as a process facilitating the monstrous oppression of the toiling masses by the state. Such a view obviously appear very uncharitable to all our protagonists of the ‘democratic state’. The Pluralists, in particular, who nurture the faith that even the poorest has some say in decision-making would get so much shocked to see such type of analysis that Historical materialism reveals. But then, the Marxian approach not only shatters the pluralist illusion, it also comes heavily on the so-called elitists and the ‘dispassionate’ functionalist to inform



them all that there can be nothing in the political process of a class-divided society that could by any stretch of imagination bring happiness or 'freedom' for the millions. Said Lenin, "The struggle for the emancipation of the toiling masses from the influence of the bourgeoisie in general, and of the imperialist bourgeoisie in particular, is impossible without a struggle against opportunist prejudices concerning the 'state'." (The state and Revolution, p. 6, Moscow edition). The 'dehumanized condition' of the human being cannot be explained, the condition of 'alienated labour' cannot be overthrown when such wrong ideas, of the pluralists and functionalists as we have noted earlier (which are more dangerous than the social chauvinists' opportunism in Lenin's time), are maintained.

The political process (and the state form guiding the same) is thus viewed as the process (and form) of Alienation. The state has developed as a power apparently standing above society and 'increasingly alienating itself from it'; the state thus develops as the embodiment of Alienation (and not as the embodiment of morality and freedom as Hegel would conceive it). Hence the need of abolishing the class-state—such abolition bringing in a process of transcendence of the condition of Alienation through the subsequent process of withering away of the *proletarian state*.

Alienation is estrangement. It is the condition of the creator being overshadowed by the creations around. The state of Alienation is the state of estrangement, of the increasing dehumanization of the human soul, that is produced in the exploitative system of society. Though essentially an economic position (of alienated labour), it gains political significance because it is the polity that sustains and represents Alienation.

Marx considers the Alienation of man as the fundamental evil of capitalist society. Alienation implies the rule of injustice and arbitrariness in human life. It results in the divorce of man as a citizen from man as a worker; it separates man from nature, from his neighbours and above all from himself.

The point is, in the process of material production men alter, along with the conditions of their existence, their entire psychological make up. Thus, Alienation is the price which the individual pays for his contribution in the production process. In Marx's language : ".....the worker is related to the product of his labour as to an alien object.....the more the worker exerts himself in his work, the more powerful the alien, objective world becomes which he brings into being over against himself, the poorer he and his inner world become, and the less they belong to him.....The worker places his life in the object ; but now it no longer belongs to him, but to the object. The greater his activity, therefore, the fewer objects the worker possesses. What the product of his labour is, he is not. Therefore, the greater this product, the less is he himself.....the life which he has bestowed on the object confronts him as hostile and alien." (Econ. and phil. Manuscripts, in 'Early Writings' Pelican edition, '75.....p. 324). Division of labour and the system of capitalist production make the worker develop a life-long speciality of serving one and the same machine. This is not just boredom. It is a more dangerous position. In the manufacturing system the worker used the tool, in the capitalist system the machine uses the worker—dead labour controlling living labour. Only by forfeiting more and more of his creative human faculties does the worker contribute to this growth of productive organization.

Labour thus remains external to the worker. Hitherto, as Marx writes, "the worker feels himself only when he is not working ; when he is working he does not feel himself. He is at home when he is not working, and not at home when he is working. His labour is therefore not voluntary but forced, it is forced labour." (EPM. op, cit. p. 326). It appears, then, that men's lives and work are controlled by 'things'—by money, by market forces, by technology. The exploitative system of production confiscates every atom of freedom, both in bodily and intellectual activity. There is no pleasure in

work ; no command of the individual worker over the work process.

Thus, to quote Ernst Fischer, "it is the division of labour with all its consequences—private ownership of the means of production and the products of labour, domination of the product over the producer, the totality of productive forces and institutions, State, church, justice etc. confronting the individual as alien forces, which produce the state Marx called Alienation." (Marx in His own Words-Pelican, '70. p. 45).

Alienation is revealed objectively in man's separation from (a) his work, (b) his tools, (c) his product and (d) the total production process. These, again, contribute to the development of the subjective feelings of deprivation or estrangement—his separation from his own self—thus a lack of wholeness, a sense of frustration, a loss of humanity. The individual becomes, so to say, a non-being with flesh and blood.

In the study of politics let us note that Alienation is the negation of human freedom and that Alienation is universal. Nay, let us further note that Alienation is sustained by the political process in a class-divided society. As Istvan Meszaros rightly points out : ".....the first stage in the development of the alienation of labour had to have a *political* form, because the existence of an agricultural surplus-product does not contain any economic determination as to the manner of its appropriation. An economic principle of appropriation and redistribution can only operate at a fairly high level of development and it presupposes a relation, already fixed, politically, between production and appropriation. (Marx's theory of Alienation—The Merlin Press ; p. 151).

Thus, even though Alienation is essentially an economic phenomenon, the process of estrangement develops under definite political conditions. That is, although the fundamental governing principle of the capitalist state is economic, ".....it cannot be divorced from the political framework in which it operates." (*Ibid.* p. 157). In political analysis, then, the significance of the concept of Alienation can hardly

be minimised. A critical attitude towards the political system that sustains the process of Alienation is essential. A study of politics must show how and when may such changes take place in the political process so that the condition of Alienation is abolished. If the state system itself appears, as Marxism reveals, as the main hindrance to such progressive changes, in that case the political analyst has the duty to work out the possible stages of elimination of the state system as such. In the Marxian programme the abolition of the capitalist state is suggested as the minimum condition for the beginning of a process of transcendence of Alienation. The proletarian state gives a political form of the emancipation of the individual worker. But for universal human freedom and for the complete abolition of Alienation the proletarian state itself must go through a process of its own withering away.

## ( II ) The Process of Withering Away of the State

The abolition of the capitalist state and the establishment of socialist authority cannot solve the human problem. However, the establishment of the socialist system ( the socialisation of the means of production ) well initiates the process of universal human emancipation.

In the socialist state the proletariat is organized as a ruling class using its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie ( and eliminating all feudal and bourgeois remnants in the superstructure ), to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state. Above all, in this state the proletariat will take measures to supersede the condition of Alienation. The actual, positive, transcending of alienation will, of course, imply disappearance of proletarian state itself. For, what for the state shall remain when none need be coerced, none to remain as a superior master, every one free to pursue his desired goals, when a fully developed humanism replaces all conceptions of guided democracy and regulated freedom ? So said Lenin. " the proletariat needs only a state which is withering

away..." (State and Revolution, p. 41 ).

Marxist materialist analysis thus conceives of a stage when politics will end. In the proletarian state "Politics...must be conceived as an activity whose ultimate end is its own annulment by means of fulfilling its determinate function as a necessary stage in the complex process of positive transcendence. This is how Marx describes communism as a political principle. "(Meszaros, *op. cit.* p. 160). And when politics ceases to be politics, communism as a political movement will develop into communism as a "comprehensive social practice" (*Ibid.* p. 161).

In historical materialism, the emergence and continuation of the state system is basically related with class battle and class exploitation. So theoretically, the state cannot but wither away if the reasons for its emergence are eliminated : if, that is to say, classes are eliminated. Communism thus has another name in classless society.

This 'withering away' does not imply that the state is somehow blown up or taken away by some force. The process of withering away is a dialectical process-a process of development through many stages of contradiction between many forces, some working consciously some operating as a legacy of the past.

The communists first establish a Socialist state by overthrowing the bourgeoisie and by establishing the proletarian dictatorship. The proletarian/socialist state, because it is a state, still remains an instrument of coercion. But the vital fact here is that this state is a preparation for the withering away of states. The classless society upholding the *each according to his need* principle is to appear through such Socialist state. It does not mean, however, that if a particular state is prepared *well* for such a classless society that state will wither away. Men like Stalin would rightly remind us that a Socialist state, howsoever advanced towards communism, would remain a state so long as the capitalist encirclement is not liquidated. In fact, the state will not, and cannot, wither



away even if a single state is capable of retaining and maintaining the capitalist system.

Even in an improved Socialist order the state is necessary so that the society is not split asunder at the hands of the Anarchists.

How far Russia or China or any other Socialist state have already paved the way towards a classless society, the way for the eventual withering away of the state, can only be answered when sufficient information is available. But as to political analysis Marxists are in a better position than Marx himself in providing an outline of the different stages/processes of the withering away of the state. Let us put one such outline in the following way :

(A) Overthrowing the bourgeoisie, the working class establishes the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is conceived as the first stage of the withering away of the state.

The coercive power remains even in the socialist state. Here the power is used (i) to suppress the former exploiters, the bourgeois-feudal remnants ; (ii) to maintain the existing system and (iii) to build socialism which is a conscious process; The state power is also used (iv) for the purpose of defending the country from external pressures and (v) to deal with common crimes.

(B) In the second stage, in a more advanced form of socialism, function (i) i. e. the suppression of the former exploiters become unnecessary. Functions (ii) and (iii) i. e. maintaining the existing system and building socialism, will remain. Also remains function (iv) i. e. use of state power for the purpose of defending the country from external attack or pressure—the state remains as an armed state. But function (v) i. e. the common necessity to deal with crimes, becomes less important and is gradually eliminated.

(C) In this third stage, the building of communist society should begin. At this stage function (ii) and (iii) i. e. maintaining the existing system and building socialism take different connotations. People would now be willing to make sacrifices.

They find more amenities and more prospects as a result of socialist transformation. At this stage the state will be the state of the whole people—the class rule of the proletariat as such becomes redundant.

The importance of a public power, however, still remains. And this public force will still operate in a state form well because of function (iv). The purpose of defending the country from external attack or pressure would remain for a long time, as long as the entire capitalist encirclement is not liquidated.

Accepting that the state withers away as and when the capitalist encirclement is liquidated, one may like to know the position in a stateless society. At least two observations may be made by the Marxists concerning that future state of affairs : First, that the stateless society will not be an anarchist one. There will be always some form of administration. But no longer will there be a coercive machine—the government of persons will be replaced by a government to administer things. Secondly, the administration undergoes a radical transformation both in form and content. Now the function of the public power is to minister to the cultural and civilizational needs of the people and society.

Any social thinking, including modern political thinking, may get immensely enriched when some such socio-political imagination, as the Marxists have revealed, get incorporated in them.

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—The Philosophy of History.

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—The Holy Family.

*Karl Marx*—The Poverty of Philosophy.

—A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy.

—Early Writings (Introduced by Lucio Colletti).

—The Class struggles in France 1848 to 1850.

—The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.

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*F. Engels*—The Origin of the Family, Private property and the State.

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—The part played by labour in the transition from Ape to Man.

—Ludwig Feuerbach and the end of classical German Philosophy.

*G.V.Plekhanov*—The Development of the Monistic view of History.

—The Role of the individual in History.

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*V.I.Lenin*—The State and Revolution.

—What the Friends of the people are and how they fight the Social Democrats.

—The Three sources and Three component parts of Marxism.

—The State (a lecture delivered in 1919).

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—Analysis of classes in Chinese society.

- Antonio Gramsci*—The Modern Prince and other writings.
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- Louis Althusser*—For Marx.
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*Alessandro Pizzorno*—Political sociology.



# Index

- Alienation, 123-128  
Almond, G., 27, 28, 80, 87, 91, 92, 109  
Althusser, L., 6  
Apter, D., 87, 98  
Aptheker, H., 67n, 107n  
Arendt, H., 102  
Aristotle, 2, 18, 19, 43, 105n
- Ball, A.R., 55n, 82n, 121n  
Bantu (tribe), 47  
Barker, E., 2  
Beard, C., 118  
Behaviouralism, 11, 14, 15, 108  
Bell, D., 49, 50  
Berger, P., 122n  
Bernal, J. D., 14, 19  
Bhambhri, C. P., 25n  
Bismarck, 52  
Bottomore, T. B., 63, 102, 108, 118  
Boudin, L., 26n  
Burns, C. D., 45
- Calvert, P., 103  
Cammett, J. M., 81n  
Carr, E. H., 44, 52  
Chang, S. H. M., 55n  
Change,  
    the problem of, 81, 83, 85  
    definition of, 84  
    political and social, 84  
    theories of, 86, 87ff.  
    and contradiction, 88, 89, 94, 100, 101, 104, 105  
Charisma, 53, 113  
Charlesworth, J. C., 106n  
Classes and class struggle, 7-9, 23, 24, 56, 57, 66, 67, 96, 104, 113-115, 119
- Class struggle,  
    and functionalism, 28  
    and state power, 31-34, 129-131  
    and parties, 71, 72, 74, 75  
Congress Party (of India), 61, 70, 77  
Consensus, 93-94, 97, 100  
Cornforth, M., 22, 70
- Dahl, R., 63, 64  
Datta gupta, S. L., 25n, 81n  
Determinism (economic), 22, 36, 60, 89, 90, 98-100, 116  
Developmental approach and political change, 91, 92  
Dialectics, 4, 7, 8, 45, 71, 72, 98, 100, 129  
Duverger, M., 78, 79  
Dysfunction, 28, 103, 104
- Easton, D., 15-19, 86, 87, 90, 91, 109  
Elites, 47, 56, 77, 91, 92, 104, 124  
    in India, 61  
Elitism,  
    of Pareto and Mosca, 58, 60, 62  
    of Lasswell, 59  
    of C. W. Mills, 60, 62  
    and determinism, 60, 63  
    and Pluralism, 63-65  
Engels, F., 9, 31, 33, 48, 66, 117
- Feuerbach, L., 5  
Fischer, E., 127  
Forces of Production, *See* Productive forces  
Friedrich, C. J., 3  
Functionalism, 17, 27-29, 103, 109, 123, 124, 125 and change, 88-92  
Ginsberg, M., 120n

- Gramsci, A., 75, 76  
Gross, F., 120n  
Gurr, T. D., 103
- Hegel, 3-5, 31, 118, 125  
Historical Materialism,  
    meaning and significance of,  
        20-25, 30, 124, 129  
    and political analysis, 115-118  
    and political philosophy, 7-9  
    and the origin of the state, 31-34  
    and determinism, 36  
    and political activity, 37, 38, 65, 66  
    and the role of ideas, 41, 49  
    and the role of heroes, 51, 52  
    and the ruling class, 57  
    and political change, 87, 94  
    and revolution, 98, 99, 104, 105  
Hook, S., 66  
Horowitz, I., 55n  
Huntington, S. P., 87, 97
- Ideology,  
    role of, 42-44  
    growth of, 45-47  
    and illusion, 48-50  
Influence, 57, 59, 64
- Jha, S. S., 68n  
Johnson, C., 103  
Jones, R. E., 106n  
Jouvenal, B., 55n
- Korsch, K., 4-6  
Kosambi, D. D., 107n
- Lal, S. K., 67n  
Lapalombara, J., 77, 78  
Laski, H. J., 34  
Lasswell, H., 57, 59, 61  
Lefebvre, H., 119  
Legitimacy, 64, 112, 113  
Lenin, V. I., 52, 116, 125, 128  
Lerner, D., 97
- Libertarian principle, 98  
Lipset, S. M., 49, 50, 87, 93, 94, 111,  
    112, 113
- MacIver, R. M., 39n, 121n  
Mao Tse-Tung, 101  
Marcuse, H., 48  
Marx, K., 1, 5, 20, 22, 30, 31, 38, 46,  
    48, 49, 58, 59, 63, 66, 73, 87,  
    94, 102, 109, 115, 116, 118,  
    119, 123, 126, 127, 129, 130  
Merton, R. K., 106n  
Meszaros, I., 127, 129  
Michels, R., 75, 76, 78, 94, 111, 112  
Miliband, R., 64  
Miller, J. D. B., 39n  
Mills, C. W., 59, 60, 62, 65, 110, 118  
Mode of Production, 21, 52, 57, 99,  
    116  
Modernization and change, 95-98  
Morgan, H. L., 31  
Morris-Jones, W. H., 77  
Mosca, G., 58, 62, 112  
Mukhopadhyay, A. K., 40n
- Naess, A., 54n  
Nature of state, *See* State and state  
    power  
Neumann, S., 78, 79
- Oligarchy, 75  
Origin of state, *See* State and state  
    power  
Osipov, G., 120n
- Pareto, V., 58, 60, 62, 94  
Parry, G., 68n  
Parsons, T., 27, 109, 110  
Personality and politics, 42-44, 51-54  
Philosophy, 1-6  
Pizzorno, A., 106n  
Plamenatz, J., 10, 11  
Plato, 2, 19, 43  
Plekhanov, G. V., 51, 52

- Pluralists and Pluralism, 63-65, 124
- Political change,  
    explanations of, 88ff.
- Political economy, 109
- Political Parties,  
    significance of, 69-72  
    in 1848 struggles, 73  
    and classes, 74, 75  
    A. Gramsci on, 75, 76  
    in India, 77  
    Duverger and Neumann on, 78, 79
- Political philosophy, 3, 9, 10, 11
- Political sociology, 15, 108-115, 119  
    meaning of, 111  
    and the idea of change, 92-94  
    *See also* Sociology of politics
- Pressure groups, 79, 80
- Production relations, 7, 21, 51, 99,  
    101, 116, 117
- Productive forces, 7, 21, 31, 37, 51,  
    99, 101
- Quinton, A., 13n
- Raphael, D. D., 9, 10, 11
- Relations of production, *See* Production relations
- Relative deprivation, 103
- Revolution (and change), 51, 52, 87,  
    91-97, 102-105
- Robinson, Mrs. J., 49
- Roucek, J., 120n
- Rousseau, J. J., 2, 10, 46
- Ruling class, 57-59, 63, 104, 112
- Ryazanoff, D., 67n
- Sartori, G., 114, 115
- Schapera, I., 55n
- Schumpeter, J., 116
- Sirsikar, V. M., 68n
- Skill struggle, 59, 61
- Smelser, N. J., 121n
- Sociology, 108, 109, 110, 118
- Sociology of politics, 108, 111, 112,  
    114-116  
    *See also* Political sociology
- State and state power, 14, 56, 124,  
    125, 128-131  
    origin of/nature of, 30-34
- Strachey, J., 122n
- Systems analysis (theory), 15-17, 86,  
    87, 89-91, 109
- Sweezy, P., 20
- Tocqueville, A. de., 94
- Tracy, Destutt. de., 48, 54n
- Veblen, T., 36
- Violence, 103
- Watkins, F. M., 54n
- Weber, M., 53, 94, 109, 111, 112,  
    113, 118
- Weiner, M., 77
- Withering away of the state, 123,  
    124, 128-131
- Zeitlin, I., 121n





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# POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

*Amal Kumar Mukhopadhyay*

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Although Political Sociology has lately emerged as an important independent discipline, widening thus the area of modern social sciences, so far very little has been written comprehensively on the nature and scope of this subject. Leading political sociologists of our times seem more interested in exploring the research materials for their subject and hence, small wonder, most of the available books on Political Sociology are marked by a bias for rather highly specialised problems. This, however, makes a problem to a beginner whom the available standard books hardly help in knowing what Political Sociology really is and what it is all about. The present work is an answer to this problem in as far as it lucidly presents a total account of Political Sociology and gives it a systematic conceptual framework. It works out a definition of Political Sociology, after differentiating it from Political Science, on the one hand, and from Sociology of Politics, on the other, and identifies the idea of politics on which rests the whole foundation of Political Sociology. After making this groundwork, it goes on giving a penetrating analysis of the key issues of Political Sociology—like Power, Distribution of Political Power, Authority, Bureaucracy, Political Culture, Political Socialisation, Political Participation and the Politics of Change—showing their relevance and also the inter-relation among them. The analysis is enriched by profuse illustrations—a good many of them from Indian experience. The added attraction of the book is its last chapter which provides a Marxist analysis of the whole discipline—an attempt never undertaken by anyone before—which, although provocative does not, of course, default in logic and clarity.

134

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